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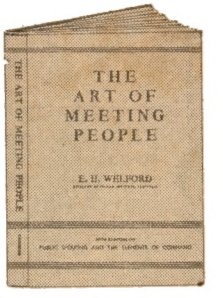

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All Creatures Great and Small

By PIA AINSWORTH

SIR GEORGE WORSLEY, helping himself to bacon and scrambled eggs and studying the heavy sky, suddenly realised that his wife was speaking to him and that she sounded upset.

"What am I to do with that boy? You brought him here and you must help me. I'm absolutely in despair . . ."

Sir George liked to spend his breakfast twenty minutes reviewing in his mind the day that lay ahead, but the urgency in his wife's voice caught his attention. He forced his wandering thoughts back to the present and looked at her affectionately. She was still speaking.

"He's been here a week and eats practically nothing and won't be touched. He — he almost snarls when I try to pet him. Cook has tried, too. I thought she might know how to handle him. She's a motherly soul at heart. You see . . ." Her voice was a little unsteady. "If we'd had any of our own, I might have had the right approach."

George laughed and crossed the room to pat his wife's thin shoulder and drop a kiss on her neat, grey head. "'The right approach' indeed! The boy's not an international situation! Surely, if you keep reminding yourself that he is nine years old and that he has been bitterly ill-used, surely just kindness and patience . . ."

"You're wrong, George," she said slowly. "Kindness isn't enough, and as for patience, he mistakes that for weakness. I suppose if you've been brought up on blows and curses you don't understand anything else."

"Nonsense, my dear. The boy went to school and was normally treated there. His teacher said he was a bright kid. In fact it's because his teacher saw the bruises and reported them that the foster parents were brought up before me. Anyway, what happened to cook?"

"He kicked her and called her an old bitch."

Sir George tried to stifle his smile; and at that moment the door burst open. A small boy shot in and dived under the breakfast table. Two seconds later, Mrs. Murphy's bulky figure appeared in the doorway. Her face was scarlet and she was out of breath. "You wicked young devil!" she shouted. "Come out from under there, will ye!"

Sir George watched, astounded, as, unsteadily, she went down on all fours and tried to crawl under the table. The child darted out on the far side and stood poised for flight, defying her. "Garn, you old fat fool!" he shouted. "Just you try and catch me."

"That's not the reason, Derek. Now, come along, tell me, and we'll try and put it right."

"She's an old fool!" muttered the boy.

Adelaide was angry. "No, Derek!" she said, very sternly, "she is nothing of the sort! She is a kind, good woman and she only wants to do the best she can for you."

There was another pause, during which the boy made a great show of kicking the design on the carpet. His next remark was unexpected. "She's always talking about God!"

"And what is wrong with that?" asked Adelaide. She prepared herself for a homily,

He was a wild, frightened little boy, and he belonged to the slums. Kindness had no effect on him—nor, it seemed, did the approach of Christmas.

Adelaide Worsley was quick to sense the fear behind this outburst and once again, as she looked at the skinny little figure, the rough hair and the scowl on the white face, her throat tightened almost uncontrollably. Nevertheless, she knew she must tackle the situation with firmness. She walked round the table, holding out her hand.

"Come and tell me what is wrong, Derek. And you, cook, do get up. Come along, Derek!" To her surprise, he followed her from the room and into the library.

"Now, Derek?"

The boy looked at her sullenly.

"Why was Mrs. Murphy so angry, Derek?"

"She's always washing me. I ain't a baby. I wash myself when I need washing."

but felt pitifully ill-equipped for it. She needn't have worried. The boy had his own way of escape. He began to jig about from one foot to another and his face assumed an expression of acute distress.

"Please could I be excused?" he cried, urgently, and before Adelaide could reply, was off at a run.

WITH a sigh, she went back to the breakfast-room. George was alone, placidly spreading his last corner of toast with the last scraping of marmalade left in the pot. He looked up as she entered and said, before she could speak: "We'll talk about it to-night, my dear. I shall miss my train. I must be off."

"We are out the whole evening, George."

"Yes, so we are. But in that case what about the boy? We can't leave him alone. That's quite out of the question."

"No, of course not, George. Alice, cook's niece, is coming in to sit with him. She's a nice, friendly girl and she used to be a nursemaid for a while before she joined the army. She's home on Christmas leave."

George grinned. "I don't somehow feel that a nursemaid is quite what is needed," he said. "Still, he'll be in bed, I suppose. She can read to him." He folded his newspaper and prepared to make his exit, but his wife had not quite finished with him. "There's something else, George. I'm worried about old Hans. I can't bear to think of him spending Christmas alone in that cottage of his."

"Why should he? He gets on very well with the lads of the village. Always goes to the local for his pint every night. After all, he learned his English from them mostly. Why the blazes should he spend Christmas by himself? You are taking all the worries of the world on your back this morning, my dear."

Adelaide handed him a clean handkerchief. "But since his wife died, he's been so lonely——"

"Save it, my dear, will you? Tell me some other time. I've got to run now."

Adelaide watched him go and went over to her writing table. On the back of a used Christmas card she wrote: "Remind George—gardener—Christmas Day" and propped it up in front of the inkwell.

ALICE looked at the little sleeping figure in the big bed. The room, with a fire burning in the old-fashioned grate, was warm and cheerful and the boy seemed to be asleep. A certain young sergeant of B.A.O.R. had arranged a record for her in

Family Favourites and she was determined to listen to it. It would only take twenty minutes or so and, if she locked the door, the boy could come to no harm.

She crossed to the window and opened the heavy velvet curtains. Frost traceries were forming on the panes and the first flakes of the snow that had hung in the sky all the day were beginning to float down in the still, cold air.

"It's snowing," she cried, delightedly. "I do like a white Christmas, don't you, Derek?"

There was no reply. She tip-toed to the bedside and gently adjusted the eiderdown. "We can build a snowman tomorrow. You'll like that now, won't you?" She bent, looked closely at the sharp little face on the pillow. The eyes were closed and the lashes, which were unusually long and silky, lay quietly on the white cheeks. She smiled and, very softly, left the room, turning the key behind her.

The boy was not asleep, but lay cowering in the big bed, not daring to open his eyes. The firelight threw queer shadows: strange, menacing shapes on walls and ceiling. The room was so huge it could be full of enemies and they could all creep up on him from the dark corners and be on him before he could see them or have time to scream. He longed for his pile of old blankets under the stairs at home. There you could, at least, feel three walls around you, one at each side and one behind so you only had to watch one direction. Here, it was like being put to bed in the middle of a field; you couldn't watch all the corners at once.

He put his head under the clothes. That was better for a minute, but then he realised that They could creep up and hold him under till he choked and he'd never even seen Them.

He looked out. The fire had fallen together and the bright flames had subsided to a red glow. It was very dark and still. He began to shake uncontrollably. He was not cold but the nervous twitching of his limbs grew worse, until he was trembling so violently that the mattress creaked. He got out of bed and went to crouch in the hearth, but even the heat of the fire failed to stop the shivering. He began to feel sick and terror took hold of him. He ran to the door, wanting human company. Even cook, the old stinker, would be better than this awful silence.

But the door was locked. Like a trapped animal, he began to scratch at the side of the lock, crying convulsively and shivering harder than ever. No one came and the heavy mahogany was cold to his frantic hands, unyielding, terrifyingly impersonal. He ran to the window, opened it and, without quite realising what he was doing, dropped to the roof of the porch, and from there to the ground.

The fall shook him and the snow, now lying to a depth of two inches, numbed his bare feet and drenched through his pyjamas. He began to run away from the house. He had no clear idea where he was going, just away. The snow was falling heavily, and large, fat flakes swirled into his eyes. Twice he tripped, collided with isolated shrubs and finally fell headlong into a rambler rose.

He raised his voice and howled, loud, rending sobs of despair and terror, and picked himself up and stumbled on into the darkness. And then a man's voice, a very deep bass, said: "Well, now! What have we got here?" and he felt himself hoisted up to what seemed a great height from the ground and carried into the brightly lit kitchen of a small cottage.

EITHER from astonishment or extreme panic, he stopped howling and was as silent and still as a trapped animal shamming dead.

He looked up at his captor and thought him the largest man he had ever seen. He kept silent, awed, as the man lowered him into a chair, peeled off his soaking pyjamas, dried him and wrapped him in a blanket.

Old Hans was silent, too, and even managed to suppress an exclamation at sight of the dreadful marks on the thin body. Derek, who found he was not afraid of the old man, was somewhat disappointed. He wanted his sufferings to be noticed. He poked a skinny arm out of the blanket. "She done that," he remarked informatively, scanning the old man's face with bright, monkey eyes.

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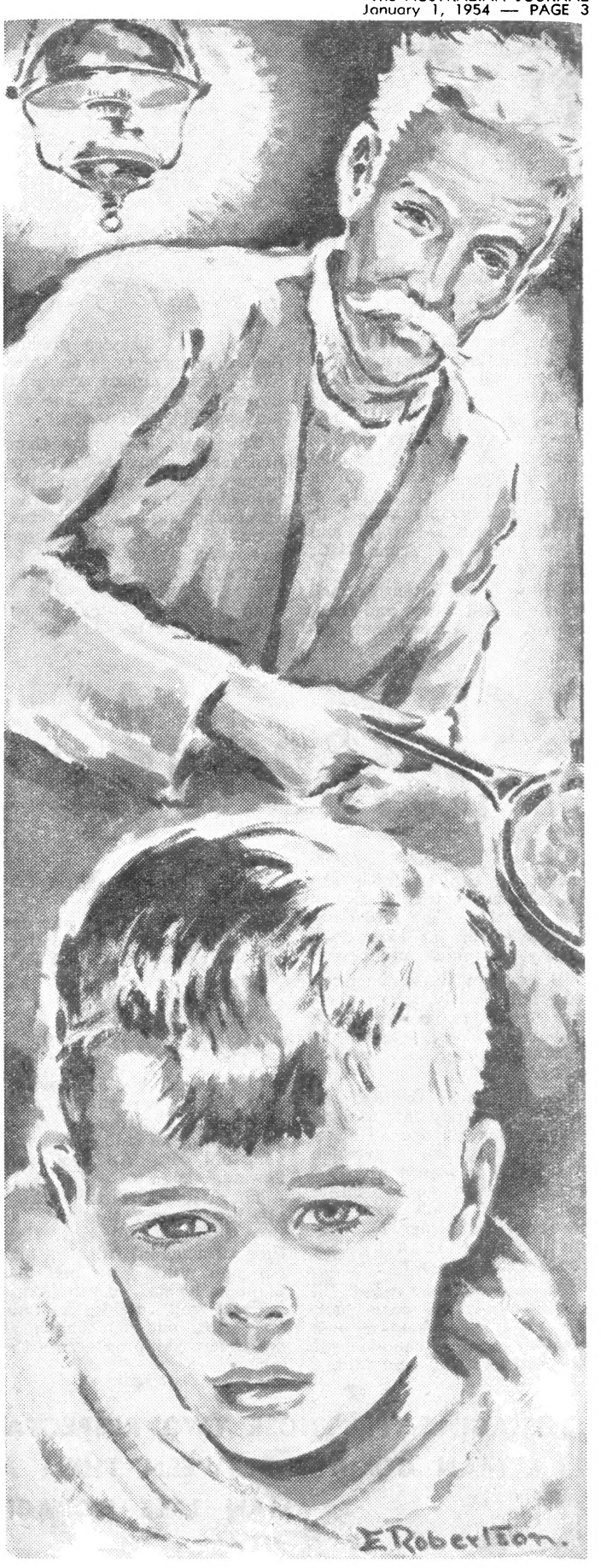

"'Ain't you got a woman to cook that?' he asked . . ."

Those who wait

FROM habit, Jessie Brantford glanced through her heavy lace curtain as she passed it. She stopped abruptly and, with an anxious cluck, reached for the small but very powerful mother-of-pearl opera glasses she kept handy.

"Oh, dear," she said to the big, battered, mottle-furred cat, who blinked at her indifferently, "Oh, dear, what a shame."

She placed her small hand on her plump bosom in a gesture left over from the elocution lessons of her youth.

The scene framed in her glasses looked harmless enough. A young woman climbed into a car with a middle-aged man, while a middle-aged couple smiled in a rather strained way, and waved good-bye from their front verandah.

She watched intently until the car pulled away, and then, sighing, she turned her attention to the tea-table she had been preparing. It looked very pretty, she thought vaguely, with its lace cloth and fine old china and silver.

"Better not have cucumber sandwiches," she murmured, they seem to bother Mrs. Graham. They would be delicious, though, it's so hot to-day."

She bent over the cat and probed delicately at a long scratch over his eye. He endured it with an expression of mingled tolerance and disgust. "It seems to be healing well. Why won't you live more quietly, Ginger? Why must you be looking for trouble all the time?

"Tomato. That's what I'll have. Want to come out, Ginger? Want to help me pick tomatoes for our sandwiches? Come along. If you didn't sleep all day, you wouldn't get into so many fights at night."

She opened the screen door at the back and gave a cry of anguish. "Oh, no! Don't pull up the flowers! What are you doing?"

The two little boys in her flower bed looked up guiltily. Then the bigger one stuck out his chest and screwed up his face challengingly. "Those aren't flowers. Those are onions."

"Oh, no! They're gladioli. See, they have buds on them. They were almost ready to flower." Helplessly, she felt her eyes fill with tears.

The little boys saw them, and for a moment their eyes grew round. Then they seemed to draw fresh courage from the sight. "Aw, take your old flowers," the bigger one said, "they're no good, anyway. You and your old cat. Our dad says you're to keep your old cat out of our yard. Didn't he, Arnie?"

"Yep," said the little one, "'cause——"

"'Cause last night our dog chased him under our ladder and knocked our dad off it."

"Good gracious," she gasped, "was he hurt?"

"Yes," said Arnie. "He swore something awful. Didn't he, Davey?"

"He certainly did. And he said if he ever caught your old cat he'd wring its neck, that's what he said. You and your old cat. And your old flowers."

They had been backing steadily toward the gate as they told her all this, then they turned and ran, the bigger one pulling up one last plant as he fled. Little Arnie stopped well outside the gate and stuck out his tongue at her before skipping across the lane.

WITH shaking hands, she replanted the gladioli, propping up their wilting stems with little sticks. What awful people those Mooneys were. She didn't see how she could bear them, right across the lane from her. She thought wistfully of the Cochranes, who had lived there before. Such lovely neighbours they'd been. She felt it was a shame one couldn't live at peace with people.

She picked her tomatoes and went into the big, immaculate old kitchen. As she worked a heavy, unfamiliar feeling of depression settled on her. She could almost feel its weight on her shoulders. Straightening her small spine, she hummed a few bars of "Moonlight Bay."

But that didn't help. It made things much, much worse. It took her back to the time when the song was new, when her father and mother were here, fond and indulgent. The time when the house was filled with music and laughter and affection. When she was young and eager and pretty—and I *was* pretty, she thought defiantly. A girl with all the "accomplishments." Father and mother had seen to that. Piano. Elocution. China-painting. Everyone had said her plates were beautiful. A young girl, filled with brave young dreams.

She gave her shoulders a sharp shake. Now what set me off like that? How silly of me. How perfectly silly. I suppose it was seeing Mildred Thornton going off with Dr. Clark. What nonsense.

Hurriedly she popped the sandwiches into the refrigerator that intruded its white bulk with cold authority into the old-fashioned room. She primped her white ruffled collar, and was smoothing her

IMAGINE IT! THOSE TWO RESPECTABLE LADIES! AND A MAN COMING BETWEEN THEM AT THEIR AGE! A MAN LIKE HORACE.

unruly soft grey curls when the doorbell rang.

MRS. GRAHAM'S gaunt form was framed in the doorway.

"Good afternoon, Jessie," she said, inclining her head on which a large, uncompromising hat sat at an equally uncompromising angle.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Graham." Jessie looked at the hat. As always, she felt a pang of pity for the flowers on it. In spite of their quelled look, they seemed to her to show a last faint spark of rebellion at their fate. She knew it was idiotic, but she always had to restrain herself from giving them a consoling pat.

Mrs. Graham lived next door, but when she came to tea at Jessie's, Mrs. Graham wore a hat and gloves. Jessie realised dimly that this had something to do with the fact that Mrs. Graham, though now a widow, had *had* a husband, while Jessie had not.

It was the same line of thought that made Mrs. Graham say things like "Salad for supper? Well, I suppose that's all right for you, but when you've cooked for a man—" "I guess I shouldn't mention this in front of you, but when she was expecting—" "When you're used to a man in the house, you—" Jessie didn't resent it. She accepted it meekly as something that happens to you if you fail to marry.

She smiled affectionately as her guest picked the most comfortable chair in the room and sat rigidly on its edge. She really was very fond of Mrs. Graham. Neither of them led what you could call exciting lives, so they lived their neighbour's lives instead. Jessie thought of it as a delightful sort of game in which each tried to outdo the other in the collecting of little titbits of news. She accepted humbly the fact that she wasn't nearly as good at it as Mrs. Graham. She often wondered, with an impish chuckle, what the neighbours would say if they even suspected how few secrets they had.

Mrs. Graham was indignant and sympathetic when Jessie described her experience with the Mooney children. "I don't know what people are thinking of, the way they raise children nowadays. I know if I'd had any, I'd have seen to it that they respected their elders. Are you going to complain to Mr. Mooney?"

Oh, no — that is, I don't think so," Jessie quavered. Mr. Mooney's red face and heavy eyebrows had terrified her even before he fell off the ladder.

"Jessie, I hate to say this, but you're weak. Sometimes I get really exasperated with you. Horace always said that it was a fear of responsibility that—" Mrs. Graham stopped so abruptly that her pince-nez fell into her lap.

Jessie flushed. There was an embarrassed silence. "Isn't it awfully warm to-day?" she asked.

"Yes, isn't it?" Mrs. Graham agreed gratefully. "So close, too. Horace always said that it wasn't so much the heat as the humidity."

Jessie considered this for what she felt was a respectful moment, and then said, "Did you know that Mr. Elliot won the garden prize?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Graham. "And do you know *how* he won it?"

"Well, I wondered. I knew that Tuesday's storm had knocked all the heads off his dahlias."

"My dear!" Mrs. Graham's voice was hushed. "He *tied them back on.*"

"But after all," put in Jessie feebly, "they were his flowers. He did grow them."

"Oh, certainly. Quite true. But do you think the judges would have decided in his favour if they'd known that those great big flowers were hanging on their stems with *raffia?*"

"Still," said Jessie. "the storm wasn't his fault. It would have been a shame, he worked so hard. He did have the nicest garden."

"Horace used to say honesty is the best policy."

"Oh, I'm sure it is," Jessie agreed hastily.

THERE was a little pause. Mrs. Graham settled her angles a shade more comfortably. Jessie sighed. She became conscious of the same feeling of depression that had bothered her earlier. She wondered, with a small twinge of worry, if she could be coming down with something.

"I see that Dr. Clark is still courting Mildred Thornton." Mrs. Graham folded her skinny hands and looked pleased . "I do hope something comes of it. Mildred is a fine girl. I can't understand the young men of to-day."

"But he's so much older—" Jessie protested. "And he's *been* married'——

"What difference does that make?"

"Oh, Mrs. Graham, it makes all the difference."

"Well, I can't say I understand you, Jessie."

"A girl should have — well, I hope nothing comes of it," Jessie burst out. "I hope she sends him packing."

Mrs. Graham pulled in her chin and looked at Jessie with astonishment. "I'm sure the Thorntons wouldn't agree with you. If I'm any judge. they're very much in favour of it."

by Vivia Hoogstraten

"That's because—that's because they're hoping—" Jessie stopped. She thought again of the other Jessie whose little ghost had been humming "Moonlight Bay" at her elbow all afternoon. She considered her carefully, as someone she had known a long time ago.

She saw the pretty dimpled face, the big bow at the back of the neck. She saw her waiting through the years for the Prince Charming she'd been serenly sure would come some day. She saw the expression of fond concern father and mother had worn so often, and remembered the carefully concealed hope they had felt whenever a suitor appeared. But they hadn't wanted her to compromise. She'd known it then, and she knew it even better now.

"You were saying?" Mrs. Graham prompted her.

Jessie returned with a start. "I mean I know the Thorntons want Mildred to be happy, and they're hoping maybe Dr. Clark—well, that he—"

"That's what I said. He'll make her a good husband. That's exactly what I said."

(Please turn to page 34)

Up in the Morning Early

Walter enjoyed bustling about at six o'clock on a nice bright summer Sunday morning. Surprisingly, other people didn't enjoy him doing it!

By GEORGE H. GILL

WALTER said what ho what ho how are we this morning in a quietly courteous sort of way to the canary as he took its cage down from the hook in the washhouse and uncovered it and carried it through to the dining-room and hung it on the hook in the window and the canary responded to Walter's greeting by bursting into merry bellows of piercing song which made Walter say whoa old boy steady steady as though the canary were a horse or something.

Because it was six a.m. and a nice bright summer Sunday morning and Walter who enjoys bustling about on nice bright summer Sunday mornings before breakfast was anxious to do his bustling quietly owing to the fact that Beryl and Beryl's mother don't share his views on the joys of watching the dawn come up like thunder outer China 'crost the bay and prefer to slumber on until nine a.m. or thereabouts and Beryl had sort of impressed that fact on Walter the night before.

Because Beryl had said surely there was no necessity for Walter to get up in the middle of the night and go pounding round the house like an elephant ruining everybody's rest after all she had to get up early every other morning surely she was entitled to a lie in on Sunday she'd be looking like an old hag if she didn't get her proper sleep it was all right for Walter but he should think of other people occasionally and Beryl's mother had added that you can't burn the candle at both ends and that was why Walter reproved the canary for its boisterous thoughtlessness and stole about on tip-toe so as not to disturb anyone.

But everyone isn't as considerate as Walter and the canary just roared louder than ever almost drowning the noise of rushing water as Walter filled the kettle at the tap preparatory to brewing himself a tasty and reviving pot of tea and finally after he'd put the kettle on the gas stove Walter left the canary in disgust and opened the back door breathing deep satisfying gulps of the sweet morning air.

There's probably nothing so exhilarating and sort of peaceful as the hose playing merrily on the lawn on a fine warm summer Sunday morning as the rising sun throws long shadows across the grass and makes flashing diamonds of the flying drops of water but it was unfortunate that some careless person had hung the iron bucket on the same hook as the garden hose in the shed because when Walter went to lift the hose down he inadvertently knocked the iron bucket down also and it bounced a few crashing times on the asphalt as it rolled across the path after first knocking over the empty beer bottles which had been put ready in the shed for the bottle-oh and you've no idea what a loud noise that all seems to make at six-fifteen on a peaceful fine warm summer Sunday morning.

THE kettle was singing in addition to the canary by the time Walter had the hose propped up through the handle of the garden fork playing cheerfully on the lawn and Walter warmed the teapot and put the tea in and then made a slight clatter of crockery as he got himself a cup and saucer from the sideboard cupboard and a slight metallic jangling as he stirred up the forks and things in the sideboard drawer looking for a teaspoon to his liking and then Walter made the tea and put the cosy made like a thatched English cottage which Little Ted and Little Jack had given to Beryl's mother for her birthday over the teapot and left it to draw while he went to the ice chest to get the milk.

It wasn't until Walter had taken almost everything out of the ice chest that he remembered he'd had the last of the milk before he went to bed the night before and also remembered that he'd forgotten to empty the ice chest and he put everything back and then made a slight clinking noise as he took the chain off the side door and unlocked the door and took the ice chest tray and emptied the water with a rather loud splosh on the side path and made somewhat of a grating sound as he slid the tray back under the ice chest.

Walter went back through the house then to the back garden and unbolted our side gate which sticks a bit since Mr. Cameron painted it and has to be thumped somewhat heavily to open it but he got it open after only three or four thumps when it swung back and hit next door's fence with a fairly audible bang and then Walter walked quietly down the side path to the front garden to get the milk only to find that the milkman hadn't been although it was now six-thirty a.m.

It was while Walter was changing the position of the hose on the back lawn that the urge came to him to have a cigarette and he had to tiptoe very silently through the house several times almost missing the creaking floorboard on each occasion he passed the bedroom door before he discovered where he'd left them but he found them at last and lit one gratefully as he made his second trip down the side path to see if there was any sign of the milkman.

WALTER had made quite a number of journeys down the side path having to thump the side gate open on each occasion owing to its unfortunate tendency to slam to and stick if left to its own devices before the milkman arrived with a clopping horse and clinking milk bottles at seven a.m. but the milkman who has a sort of hearty carrying voice wasn't a bit abashed at his lateness but was all prepared to be much later at other customers' houses by having a yarn with Walter.

And the milkman said too right it was dry but Walter needn't worry the drought hadn't started yet he'd heard that this year was going to be a proper humdinger you'd see milk going up it was a

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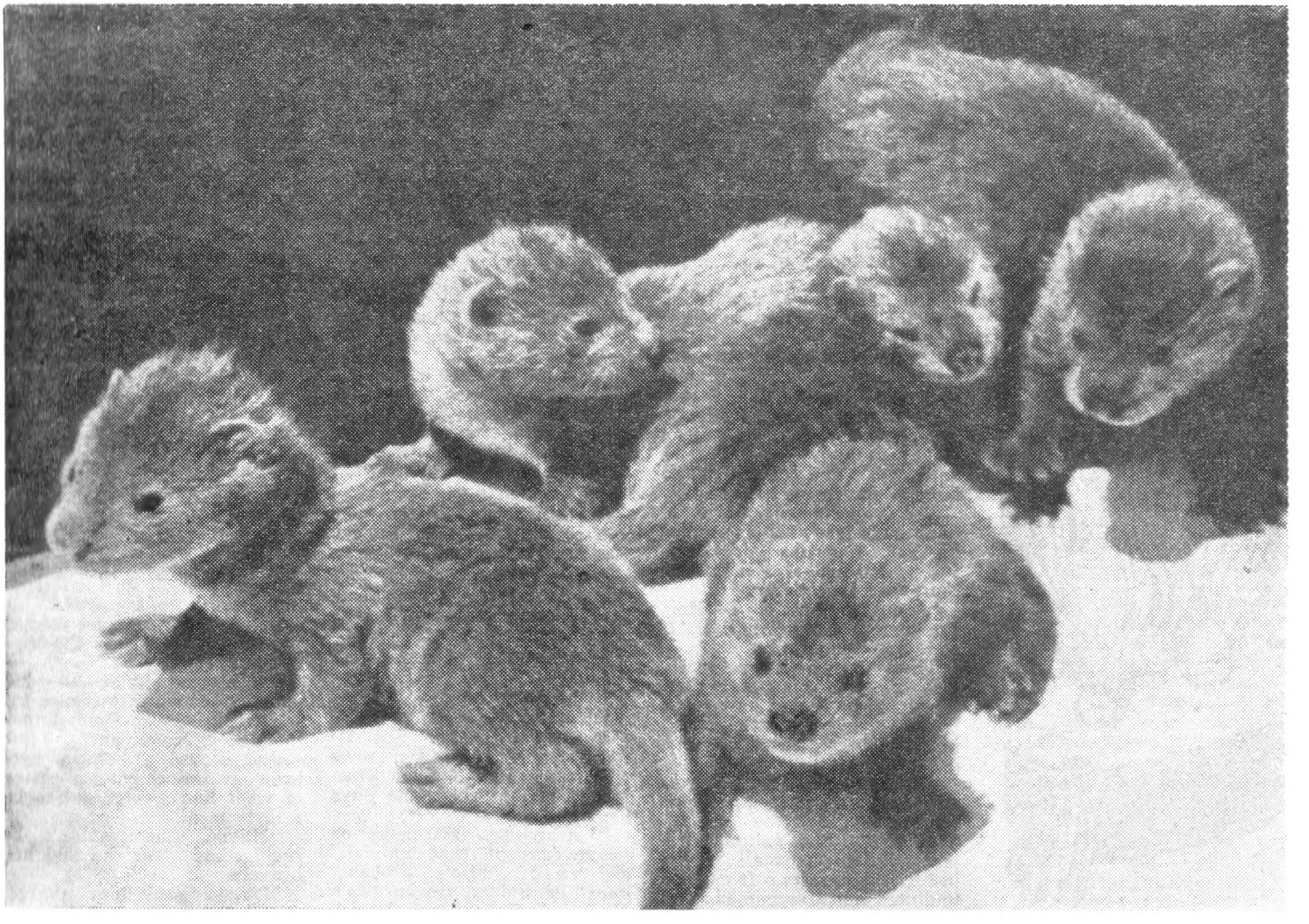
Animals Who Wear Mink Coats



These baby mink are five weeks old. They look tame enough now, but very soon they will be at each other's throats and anyone's fingers.

IF you should be walking along the quiet lanes of Totteridge, North London, and if you should come face to face with a pug-nosed, foot-long little animal with a brown fur coat which you would not mind putting on your own back, don't think you've been dreaming. The animal is a mink, one of two escapees from London's only mink farm at Totteridge Green. They rushed the fence last summer and haven't been seen since.

But whatever you do, however engaging the little creature might be, don't give it your finger to suck: it's likely to walk away with half of it.

In dollar-hungry Britain, raising mink is but one of a hundred and one ways in which enterprising people have been making headway. And it is succeeding. Up and down the country in places as far apart as Devon and Aberdeen, some 300 people are now breeding mink and selling the pelts. All it takes is a little money, some spare space, a way with animals and a willingness to work long hours out of doors in cold or wet weather.

Because cold and wet is just what the mink likes. A denizen of the Canadian wilds, it is a tough, hardy little animal with an appetite bigger than its stomach capacity. In America, people have gone in for mink ranching in a big way. But up to the end of the war few in Britain had ever thought of raising mink in their back gardens. For Mr. Bernard Hicks—who owns the Strathearn Nursery and Fur Farm at Totteridge Green—it was a way of killing three birds with one stone, help his daughter Nancy, get a new hobby and make some money.

It all started in the spring of 1951. Mr. Hicks' daughter Nancy, 19 at the time, was coming home from school; she wanted to do something on her own, preferably something to do with animals and flowers. Mr. Hicks' friends who then visited his beautiful period house on the brow of a hill, say that he got the idea for mink farming from a television programme. But he himself, a bedding manufacturer with an unusual turn of mind, thought merely that anything out of the ordinary would be fun. The TV programme was a spur.

Neither he nor his wife and children had the faintest idea on how to raise mink in captivity, so they set out to learn. They bought books from America and Canada, asked fur companies for advice and

By RENE LECLER

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Coney's Big Romance

By K. M. Madge

MARGE glared across at the evening paper. Behind that printed barrier Jeff had been firmly planted for fifteen minutes.

"Jeff, please put down that paper and at least pretend you're interested in your home and family."

The barrier was lowered a few inches. "What family?" he asked.

Marge stabbed blindly at a sock she was darning and knotted the wool. She thrust the workbasket aside irritably.

"Jeffrey Ridge, do you mean to say that you can sit there snug, warm and contented, and tell me you haven't noticed?"

The paper came down in final surrender. Jeff studied his ruffled spouse very carefully. He smiled and rustled the paper tentatively.

"A new hair style. Darling, I'm sorry. I didn't notice. It suits you beautifully."

The smile was not returned.

"Jeff, you exasperate me. My hair is the same as it's been for twelve months, and I haven't been near a hairdresser in weeks."

Jeff shrugged. "I never was very good at guessing. You tell me."

"Look!" She pointed dramatically to a small wicker bed by the fire, its soft cushion undinted and unoccupied. Jeff jerked upright in sudden alarm.

"Where's Coney?" he demanded.

"Outside."

"Then I'll bring him in." He moved towards the door, but Marge stopped him.

"It's no use, Jeff. I've tried. I've invited. I've pleaded. I've coaxed. I've even tried ordering. Once I carried him in, but he whimpered and scratched at the door till I let him out."

Jeff sat down again, the paper forgotten. "How long has this been going on?" he asked.

"A bit yesterday and all day to-day," Marge told him. "I didn't take much notice yesterday. I thought it might just be a bone he had to keep an eye on. But I've watched him and it isn't."

"What is it? Where is he? What's he doing?"

"He's alongside the back fence. Sometimes he sits and sometimes he lies down, but all the time he looks sad." She sat on the floor and leaned her head against Jeff's knee. "And he used to be such a happy little dog."

Jeff smoothed her dark curls consolingly. "Does he eat?"

Marge nodded. "Yes, but he gave me the impression that food was only a secondary consideration. Oh, Jeff, what are we going to do?"

"I think you'd better take him to the vet." Jeff's voice was firm with decision.

Marge was dubious. "I don't think it will do much good. Still, mother and I will take him along to-morrow."

Jeff continued to smooth her hair consolingly.

MRS. CLIFFORD was not so sympathetic. She listened to Coney's symptoms without comment. Then when Marge had finished, she gave her opinion.

"Vet my eye. You make too much fuss of that animal," she said. "He's probably guarding hidden treasure — a black and smelly, deeply buried bone."

Marge shook her head. "No mother, though I do think a vet will be useless." She hesitated, then suddenly blurted out, "I think Coney wants to leave us."

"Leave you?"

Marge's eyes filled with sudden tears. "Yes. You see, whenever I open the gate he tries to rush out. Once I even found him trying to dig his way out. Oh, mother, why should he try to leave us?"

Mrs. Clifford studied her daughter for a few seconds, then suddenly started to laugh. Marge's face flushed angrily.

"And it's no laughing matter."

Mrs. Clifford went on laughing, her short, stout body shaking. At last she wiped her eyes.

"Oh, Marge! And I thought you knew all about the birds and the bees."

"Mother, I'm not quite sure I understand what you're trying to say."

Mrs. Clifford wiped her eyes again. "Darling, the time has arrived, as it does with most male creatures, when Coney *wants* to go on the loose."

"Mother!" Marge was horrified. "I'd remind you that Coney is well brought up."

"I'll match nature against upbringing any day," Mrs. Clifford told her.

JEFF was home early that night.

His welcome was brief. Jeff propped himself in a safe spot and sadly contemplated his frizzled dinner. Silence seemed wise and Marge was the first to break it.

She blurted out at last. "If you say one word, just one, I'll —I'll—I'll throw your dinner into the garbage can."

Jeff cocked a dubious eyebrow at the charred remains of what had started out to be a tasty meal.

"Maybe that wouldn't be such a bad idea," he told her bravely.

Marge faced him angrily across the kitchen table.

"You brute," she stormed. "You low-down callous brute! I go through the worst experience in all my life and all you can think about is your stomach."

Jeff approached her cautiously, but she fell willingly into his arms. He soothed her till the tears ran out.

At last he thought it safe to enquire. "Now, what's it all about?"

"I—I saw Mr. Robins to-day——"

Jeff jerked back, alarmed. "Coney! He's all right?"

Marge hesitated. "Well, he's not exactly sick, but he's not all right. Oh, Jeff, it was horrible. Mr. Robins is so

young and to have him stand there and explain—well, things to me as though I were—were—ignorant—well—it was embarrassing, horribly embarrassing. And mother can say 'I told you so'." She saw Jeff's mouth twitch. "And if you laugh, Jeffrey Ridge, I'll—I'll divorce you."

Jeff went ahead regardless and Marge finally joined him.

Dinner was eventually accomplished out of tins and leftovers. Coney was forcibly ensconced by the fire and the problem was tabled for discussion.

Jeff studied the miserable shell of what had once been a happy pup. "Something has just got to be done," he declared.

"But what?" Marge asked.

Jeff scratched his chin, then enquired, "Didn't Mr. Robins have any suggestions to offer?"

MARGE blushed at the memory, looking for the moment so lovely that Jeff forgot the problem in hand. His mind was brought back into focus by certain words uttered by the object of his adoration.

"I beg your pardon," he gasped.

"Well, there's not much difference," Marge told him heatedly. "Pick out a female whose pedigree appeals and arrange the time and the place."

Jeff caught on and squashed an urge to laugh.

"But, Marge," he remonstrated. "All the best dogs are put to stud."

"Well, I think it's indecent."

"Would you prefer to turn him loose in the street to run with the mob?" Jeff enquired.

"Now you're being indecent," she snapped back.

"Well, it's one or the other," Jeff told her, "if Coney is to lead a full, happy life. Otherwise——"

Marge thought for a few moments, then, "All right. A meeting shall be arranged. But I still don't like it."

Apparently Coney didn't either, for he firmly shunned all female company offered.

"He's abnormal," Jeff concluded.

"He's been well brought up," Marge retorted.

Jeff laughed. "More likely he wants to sow his own wild oats, not some we've hand-picked for him."

Marge didn't answer. Instead she sighed. "Well, I guess we just have to wait till it passes and watch Coney grow into a fussy, frustrated old man."

IT was Jeff who first noticed. He came in from the garden Sunday morning with a question to be answered.

"Marge, why does Coney sit at the back fence?"

Marge slipped another potato into the dish. "Why shouldn't he?" she counter-questioned. "He's been there all week."

Jeff tried again. "Yes, I know, but it just struck me. Why the *back* fence?"

Comprehension came. "Of course. If he just wanted to get out, he'd patrol the side gate."

"But he doesn't want to get out the side gate. He wants to get through the back fence." Jeff frowned. "It's the Sullivans isn't it? Now what's suddenly so attractive about the Sullivans. It can't be Johnny or Margaret. Coney doesn't like children. And they haven't a dog. Or have they? I haven't seen them for months!"

Marge had subsided dejectedly on to a handy chair.

"The Sullivans moved six weeks ago. At the back we now have Miss Hawkins and Clara and Susan and Jane."

"Clara and Susan and Jane?" Jeff queried.

"Three pure, blue-blooded, aristocratic silkys. Just as blue-blooded and silky as Coney. But don't get excited, Jeffrey Ridge. If Coney has his heart set on Clara or Susan or Jane, it's just hopeless. You couldn't suggest anything like that to Miss Hawkins."

"Why not? Some very nice people breed dogs."

"Well——" Marge waved her hands helplessly. "You just take a peek through the back fence. You might see her."

Jeff's peek revealed a painfully trim backyard over which not even a sparrow would have misbehaved. Stiffly starched white curtains hung decorously at the back windows and on the back verandah stood three neat little puppy homes out of which protruded three sandy heads.

As luck would have it, Miss Martha Hawkins was also on view. Jeff had a longer peek, then sympathetically stroked the sandy head on his own side of the fence.

"Bad luck, Coney. There just isn't a hope." He pulled gently at the silky ears as the idea came. "Or is there?"

At 4.30, when Clara, Susan and Jane passed the front gate on their closely chaperoned tour of inspection, Jeff stopped the lawn mower and strolled casually towards the back.

Marge didn't lift her head from the seedlings she was transplanting; even if she had, the house was an effective shield for Jeff and the job he'd set himself.

Once again that night Coney was missing from the family gathering. At one stage Jeff was missing too.

"Was that Coney barking?" Marge asked when he returned.

Jeff shook his head. "It was either Susan, Clara or Jane. I left my hammer up the back when I fixed the fence this afternoon. When I retrieved it just now, Susan, Clara and Jane all thought I'd come to raid the cabbage patch."

"What did Miss Hawkins think?"

Jeff chuckled. "She didn't show. I think she must be at church."

It was ten o'clock when the doorbell rang. On answering it, Jeff found a much distressed Miss Hawkins on his doorstep. Wisps of grey hair poked at odd angles from beneath an outmoded hat, now perched at an extremely rakish angle.

At Jeff's appearance her distress increased. She darted wildly towards the front gate, then back again. Marge's curiosity saved the night. She peered cautiously over Jeff's shoulder, then followed Miss Hawkins in her second wild dash for the gate.

"Miss Hawkins. Whatever is the matter?"

"Oh, dear. Oh, dear, Mrs. Ridge! It's so—so dreadful. And on a Sunday, too!"

Marge coaxed her towards the front door.

"You come in and tell me all about it."

Miss Hawkins cast an anguished look at Jeff. "I couldn't. I couldn't possibly. Not in front of Mr. Ridge."

"Mr. Ridge won't be anywhere near us."

Marge reassured her and the two vanished into the security of the lounge room. They emerged a few minutes later with Miss Hawkins still muttering:

"And on a Sunday, too."

Marge glared in Jeff's general direction, but there was a suspicion of a saving quiver at the corners of her mouth.

Jeff was in bed when Marge returned some time later, a subdued Coney cuddled in her arms.

WHEN she entered the bedroom, empty-handed now, Jeff shook his head in mock disapproval.

"Fancy, Coney! And on a Sunday, too."

Marge made a determined and half-successful effort not to smile. "Jeff, how could you?" she protested.

"Why blame me?"

"You loosened a paling, didn't you?" she demanded.

Jeff hesitated, then, "I cannot tell a lie. With my little hammer, I did it."

"Jeff, poor little Miss Hawkins is terribly upset and dreadfully shocked."

"So I noticed." He grinned unfeelingly. "But seriously, Marge, that backyard looked as though it needed a scandal."

"Miss Hawkins backyard was just how she wanted it."

Jeff yawned. "Oh well, I'll take Coney's pedigree around in the morning. That's impressive enough. It should console her."

"Jeffrey Ridge, don't you dare."

AND there the subject closed till next morning. It was Jeff who reopened it. He came in from the backyard and propped against the kitchen door.

"Where did Coney sleep last night?"

"Out the back. I thought he deserved it."

Jeff shook his head and tut-tutted mournfully. "But, Marge, I forgot to nail up the back fence."

She stood before him and nodded meekly. "Yes, dear. I know."

He drew her closer and told her sternly, "Margery, you should have thought of Jane and Susan and Clara."

Marge stretched up and gave him a butterfly kiss. "But, darling. That's just what I did." ●

By NIGEL MORLAND

3-D Murder

Scotland Yard's only woman Assistant-Commissioner looked as hard-bitten as a perfect lady can, but she had her gentler moments.

MRS. PYM'S opinion of the three-dimensional film she was supposed to be enjoying was not improved when a man fell from the dress circle, and lay silently in the centre aisle.

It had been Detective-Inspector Bill Starr's idea that Scotland Yard's only woman assistant commissioner would enjoy "The Red Riders Are Out." The picture contained hordes of Red Indians and U.S. Cavalry, charging or shooting indiscriminately into the enchanted audience flinching ecstatically behind coloured spectacles.

But, as Mrs. Pym told her good-looking, green-eyed assistant: "Starr, these sort of films may be fun, but I find them like eating pudding by having your face pushed in it." He was still chuckling at the opinion when the man fell from above.

The producer of the film would have been enraptured had he known that those in the vicinity thought the happening a part of the noisy screen story, a sort of fourth dimensional effect.

The attendants of the vast New Century Theatre, which overlooks Hyde Park Corner, are well trained, and the man was quickly wafted away, Mrs. Pym trailing the cortege in Starr's company—an off-duty policeman is something that does not exist.

The corpse was laid on the manager's office floor. In the light he was shown to be a flash-looking, sharp-seeming character who, on this occasion, had a small hole in the centre of his forehead.

Mrs. Pym jerked at the front of her tweed jacket, standing there very much in charge, a solid, stolid woman of late middle age who had no time for nonsense and whose personality dominated the crowded room.

"Inspector," she nodded at Starr. "While we're waiting for the doctor . . ." she turned to study a little man in evening dress who hurried in. "Who're you?"

The white-haired manager, at Mrs. Pym's side, waved.

"My assistant, Godey. Godey, tell Mrs. Assistant Commissioner Pym anything you have to say."

"Yes, sir." Godey ducked his oiled head. "This man sitting . . ." He paused at the sight of the body, hurrying on at the expression in Mrs. Pym's bleak blue-grey eyes. "He was two seats in from the left aisle, dress circle. Front row."

"Eh?" Mrs. Pym glared. "Nonsense! He's been shot from the front."

"Ye . . . es." Godey wriggled uneasily. "The people next to him, and him as well, stood up when people came in to get to seats farther along——" He paused and dashed out, returning with an elderly gentleman and a youth. They stared at the corpse in horror while Godey murmured: "Mr. Arthur Luker, and his son, Reginald."

"Tell us what you know, will you, please?" It was Starr speaking, in his most courteous voice. Mrs. Pym was growing irate and he took over for her — she disliked mysteries, but impossible ones were her pet and most choleric dislike.

"Well . . ." Reginald Luker flinched. "That . . . the man who . . ."

"Don't be stupid, Reggie. He's a dead 'un." Old Arthur Luker's voice was sharp. "Tell 'em. The corp' won't bite."

"Yes, father. This chap was in his seat when we come in, about an hour ago. We was enjoying the film when two girls come in, passing us, like, when we stood up. Me and dad sat down, but him—this chap—fell over the balcony, just like that."

"Did you hear a gun or anything?" Starr asked.

"Bless you, in all that noise you wouldn't have heard nothing." It was the older man speaking. "One of them soldiers on the film, looks like. Real bullets, or something. Dangerous, I call it. Unless the chap wasn't there at all. Some film trick, I shouldn't wonder, to fool us." He pointedly ignored the body.

AT the end of an hour this was confirmed by the two girls who had come in, while others, near by, had seen nothing. With an audience hidden behind coloured spectacles, Mrs. Pym was not at all surprised. The doctor's suggestion that the wound came from a .22-calibre revolver fired fairly close did not help matters, though the younger Luker thought a gun had flashed near him, just before the murder, "but, of course, maybe it was in the film. I couldn't be sure."

Mrs. Pym was really angry. Still in the manager's office, with an informative detective-inspector from divisional headquarters to help her, she was bluntly irate.

"He's a nobody, a local wide boy with a bad reputation, named Pircher. He's still murdered. But nobody saw a thing, like the invisible man in Chesterton's story . . ." she paused.

"You mean," Starr suggested helpfully, "it *was* somebody on the screen after all?"

The local inspector chuckled at her irateness: "Yeah, a Red Indian using a captured rifle. Be your age, Starr!"

When the last patron of the New Century had gone home, the staff was lined up in the front foyer. There were grumbles but these stopped when Mrs. Pym appeared, raking the line with watchful eyes. Her purposeful stride suggested a sergeant parading defaulters, then she snapped:

"I want every woman in this line to hold out her hands, backs upwards, please."

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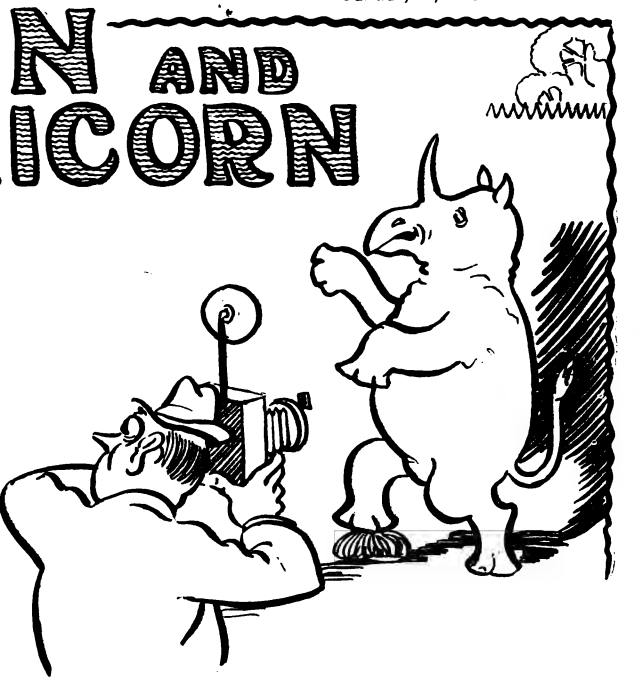
LION AND UNICORN



The Unicorn is the rarest animal in the world. The only place you're likely to meet it is on the Royal Coat-of-Arms.

By JOHN HOGARTH

AT the time of Her Majesty's Coronation a certain Australian editor sent a photographer to the Zoo with instructions to get a picture of a unicorn in action. But as the Zoo was permanently out of unicorns, the photographer had to content himself with "shooting" the bouncing curves of a rhinoceros. Actually, there's no such animal as a unicorn, and there never has been. Then what about the unicorn that appears with the lion in the Royal Coat of Arms? An old historian has called shields and coats of arms "silent names"; and in the Royal Arms the unicorn stands or is "named" for Scotland.

Elaborate Designs.

IT all goes back to a time when only "clerks and monks," and sometimes kings and queens, could read. The banner a king carried into battle and used as a rallying point when danger threatened, was painted or sewn with a pattern or "device" which told who the king was, what he stood for, and even his family descent. This, then, is the origin of our now very complicated design of lion and unicorn seen on official documents and on many government buildings such as the Treasury in Spring Street, Melbourne.

The use of banners dates further back than any written record; but painted shields became necessary when the Norman kings introduced armour so completely concealing that it was impossible to tell friend from foe. In order to avoid being struck down by a comrade's battle-axe, a man carried a shield adorned with his own device, a sort of trade mark. At first simple designs were used, showing common or fabulous creatures which became identified in the minds of beholders with certain qualities, and applicable to certain families of noble birth. As families increased and divided, and time went on, these designs became more elaborate. Shields were halved and quartered to show the combining of arms by marriages, although few women were entitled to bear arms in their own right. A register of arms was set up in London about 1240, and from this we can trace the origin of family badges and crests, and in particular the story of the Royal Coat of Arms, which is, in a way, the coat of arms of every member of the British Commonwealth.

From Royal Arms to Hotel Signs.

IN the thirteenth century young Richard II of Bordeaux placed under his shield a white hart chained to a tree. This painted animal gave its name to inns all over England; and even in this country there are many hotels bearing the sign of the White Hart, although for many centuries it has had no place in Royal Arms. For when Henry IV deposed Richard II, he carried into battle his family arms of Lancaster, supported on either side by "a white swan and an antelope proper," that is, painted in natural colours. From this change dated a long line of White Swan inns, often known affectionately to their patrons as "the Dirty Duck." Henry V exchanged the swan (denoting beauty, strength and learning) for the more martial lion rampant, that is, rearing on hind legs, forepaws beating the air; but the sixth Henry, consistent with his gentler disposition, supported his shield with two antelopes.

Edward IV combined courage with gentleness—on the right of the shield a lion rampant, on the left a white hart. In turn Richard III stamped the Royal Arms with his personality by introducing as supporters two boars rampant. Not, one might consider, particularly regal animals; but the boar — then common in England — was regarded as the champion of wild beasts, a really tough customer to meet in any neck of the woods.

Henry VII, our first Tudor king, supported the Royal Arms on the right with the red dragon of his native Wales, and on the left with a greyhound. Curiously, the latter is still the sporting companion of thousands of Welsh miners. Henry VIII—although keener on hunting than his father — exchanged the greyhound for a kingly lion rampant, putting it in the place of honour to the right of his shield, the Welsh dragon on the left.

Overshadowed by his father, Edward VI did not alter the

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Prince Charles and his mother look from a window at Balmoral, the Scottish castle where the Royal Family spend their summer holidays.

Charles Philip Arthur George

By LADY PEACOCK

What does the world hold for a small boy interested in trains, teddy bears and the really important things of life? He's not worrying about the Throne, anyway.

IT may be thought unreasonable to compare the life of a royal child with that of an ordinary boy or girl, as it may seem that that the former enjoys so many advantages denied to the latter.

In fact, there is only one fundamental difference between them and that difference is greatly to the disadvantage of the royal child.

An ordinary child can look forward to living his life, according to his opportunities, to follow his own bent in the pursuit of happiness. The royal child, on the other hand, is dedicated to the public service and, whatever his personal hopes and desires may be, the pattern of his life is inexorably marked out without regard to his own likes and dislikes.

This involves a discipline, throughout his life, unequalled in the case of any non-royal person. Every action, almost every word, comes under the microscope of public scrutiny.

Does this difference call for any distinction in the methods of upbringing? Not in the matters of feeding, clothing and health. The main difference lies only in the matter of education which, for the royal child is determined by his station; it has to follow certain lines, to fit him for his future position.

Where Love Reigned.

THAT they cannot always follow their own inclination in marriage is one of the sacrifices attaching to royalty. In earlier times, considerations of state, of policy, of religion or of economics, came before the personal wishes of the prince or princess.

Happily, in our more democratic days, the individual has great freedom of choice. This was seen in the marriage of our late King and the Queen Mother and in that of Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh.

When, therefore, Prince Charles came into the world at 9.14 in the evening of 14th November, 1948, he shared one advantage with less highly-placed children; he was born into a home in which love reigned.

Prince Charles was born at Buckingham Palace and spent the first few months of his life there. The old schoolroom was turned into a nursery for the little Prince; his cot was the same that his mother had used when she was a baby. Many of his baby clothes were made by his great-grandmother, Queen Mary, and Princess Elizabeth, as she then was, knitted many of his first woollies.

On 15th December, 1948, came the great event of christening, with its traditional associations. It took place in the white and gold music room of the Palace. The Prince was in his chistening robe of silk and Honiton lace which, over a hundred years before, had been made for the children of Queen Victoria. The Prince was taken into the room by his nurse, Sister Helen Rowe, who held him during the service.

Before the actual christening, he was handed over to Princess Margaret, to be given into the arms of Dr. Geoffrey Fisher, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

In answer to the Archbishop's question, Princess Margaret gave the names by which the baby would be known, Charles Philip Arthur George.

The famous Lily Font was used which was first made for the christening of Queen Victoria's children. In accordance with traditional custom, the water in the font came from the River Jordan in Palestine.

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Flesh of Your Flesh

By MARY BELL

He wanted to build boats like his father, but anyone could do that. The right thing was to be a doctor, whether you wanted to or not. Or was that right?

GUS ERICSSON stood in the dish-strewn kitchen of the Ericsson weatherboard house and yelled "Johnny!"

There was no answer. He stood still a moment in the shadowy room, accustoming his sun-strained eyes to the dimness after the outside brilliance and his ears to the quiet after the afternoon of hammering, out there on the slip. First he saw nothing but floating geometrical shapes; heard nothing but the clangour of his hammer meeting copper nails. Then he was able to take in that the schoolbag and Johnny's shoes weren't thrown in the corner and that there was no sound but the blind flapping in the living-room.

Johnny was late again. After last night's dressing-down about not coming home till six each evening he had felt sure the little devil would be in early to-night. Gus flung his unbanded felt working hat at the peg behind the door and all his anger disappeared in a puff like the dust that rose from it as it landed. There remained only the heavy loneliness he always experienced when Johnny wasn't about, and the little fear for what might be happening to him, haunting his thoughts.

To-night he'd have to lecture the boy again about getting in too tired to eat or do his homework. Meanwhile he started preparing the evening meal. He was a big sun-seasoned man in splattered khaki trousers and torn cotton singlet, moving with curious ease about the small kitchen, peeling potatoes and chopping greens deftly with his strong tradesman's hands. In the ten years since Margaret's death Gus had learned house-keeping as he went along, and if the house did get a bit cluttered not the most righteous mother in Clifford could say young Johnny ever looked neglected or poorly fed. Clifford folk had long since given up offering to assist Gus in the care of his son.

Since the night Margaret died, when Johnny was still dribbling through the pangs of tooth-cutting, no one but Gus had so much as changed a napkin for the boy. All the dogged Norse spirit of old man Ericsson, Clifford's original boatbuilder, hardened in his son Gus to a shell of resistance. Overnight the burly toiler of the slipway became the awkward nurse and trial-and-error housekeeper, but before long his very self-sufficiency defied man or woman to offer sympathy or help.

The voices of children fishing drifted up to him from the back-yard jetty, but Johnny's silver-blonde crown wasn't amongst the bobbing row of heads he could just see from the kitchen window. Distantly a woman's voice, pitched up and bird-like, summoned some home to dinner. The boys who had been called scrambled up and ran home across the yard beside the slip, the thud of their horny bare feet muffled by the sawdust-carpeted ground. Was it a woman's voice and discipline that Johnny needed? Gus shied away from the question.

At first the loss of his wife had paralysed all feeling for any human being except young Johnny. Not that the boy reminded him of Margaret's laughing sweetness—he was a spare, solemn child, long-boned and fair as all the Ericsson men were, and she'd been black-haired and plumply merry. Yet some queer streak of constancy always prevented Gus from seeing women as women for him. The match-makers of Clifford had by now abandoned hope, though the Clifford spinsters themselves never gave up, Gus being wider of shoulder and handsomer of face than most eligibles. The older generation shrugged. If Ericsson couldn't forget Johnny's mother, that was his affair. Clearly Gus' life centred on the boy and his ambitions for him. Look at the way he was always saying "I'm going to make him a doctor," before young Johnny was even enrolled at school. From anyone else Clifford would not have stood such high-flying talk, but the town knew Gus and

his bee-in-the-bonnet, stemming from his wife's tragic death, about there never being enough doctors.

THE front gate banged and Johnny came through the house. He looked drawn and tired beneath the sea-tan that Clifford children wore like a uniform the year round. His greeting was an uneasy mixture of breeziness and apology.

"'Lo, Dad!"

Gus turned from the stove, fighting away the relief that smudged his severity.

"G'day, son. Set up for us, will you? This is nearly ready. And then you can tell me where the hell you've been till now. Didn't I make it pretty clear you're to be home here after school no later than five?"

From Johnny's brown paws the knives and forks clattered to the table in a drum-roll of resentment.

"I know, Dad, but——"

"But—you know I want you to put in a bit of extra time on your school work. You're too tired to do it of a night, always. You're even too tired to eat by the time you get in. I've never stopped you playing round all you want, but d'you want me to . . ."

He almost said "D'you want me to make you help me on the slip after school, the way the Steen kids have to help their old man with the milking?" — then he remembered how often he'd turned Johnny away from the tools and timbers of boatbuilding. A doctor's hands had to be whole and supple.

". . . d'you want me to have to drag you in while you're with the other kids?" he finished lamely.

The boy had drawn his chair up to the table and sat, elbows spreadeagled between his cutlery, brown palms cupping his brown face and kneading up the flesh of the cheeks till his round eyes were inscrutably slanted and all expression distorted. Hiding the hurt in his voice was not so simple.

"I was only with the kids, Dad. I forgot the time."

"Wish I could forget the time. What the devil were you doing? You weren't with the kids you're usually with . . ."

Johnny bent to a mouthful of meat and vegetables. His casualness was a shade overacted.

"Few of us went digging for pippies over at Old Wreck."

Gus glanced up from his own plate but his son kept his eyes on his food. In summer digging pippies was as much an industry with the youngsters as boat-hiring was with the adults of Clifford. Visitors bought pippies for bait but now, in the off-season, three hours' digging didn't ring quite true. Gus had never accused Johnny of lying and he wasn't going to now. Instead he slammed his tough palm down on the table, making the cutlery jingle and the boy straighten up with surprise.

"Right, son. From here on you'll be home at five and get your head in a book for half an hour before tea. No more of this going to sleep over your homework. And maybe you'll get back to your old place in class. Fact is, if you don't spark up a bit, I'm going over to find out from your teacher whether you're as casual at school as you are here. Understand?"

"Okay, Dad."

MEALTIME strung itself out through dessert and big cups of tea, all taken in silence compounded of fatherly anxiety and childish resentment. When it was finished they had a day's washing-up to do, then Gus filled his pipe and strolled into the sitting-room and Johnny followed with his school books. The nightly ritual of helping his son with his homework was one Gus treasured. He never liked thinking of the time when Johnny's work would extend beyond his own knowledge and he would no longer feel he was helping. He clung to the memory of the boy at eight, bragging to the Steen kids "My Dad hears my tables without a book—an' he knows 'em up to thirteen times!"

The story went the rounds of the Clifford fathers who simply accepted it as one of Gus' odd ways. They were content to let the Education Department do its best with their young from nine till three, five days a week. Learning had never carried much prestige in Clifford, livelihood being the more immediate problem. Sometimes a brilliant child happened out of a dairy-farming or fishing family like a quartz outcrop in red dirt country, but if he ever travelled any distance academically it wasn't due to home encouragement.

Johnny'd never have that trouble, mused Gus smugly as he took the boy's spelling book. From his first days at school he'd heard his spelling, gone over his arithmetic with him and asked questions on his history and geography lessons. And wasn't Johnny always head of his class? — at least, until these last couple of reports, which was about when he'd taken to this dawdling home late and tired after school? Perhaps a doctor ought to check him over. Maybe he was growing too quickly. Boys did, round the ten or eleven mark.

"Spelling first, Dad."

Johnny's voice recalled Gus to his evening chore. Tonight, despite the signs of fatigue under his eyes, Johnny spelt confidently and correctly. They turned to the geography lesson for the next day and read paragraphs alternately. The answers to Gus' keen questions didn't come so readily. Johnny was dog-tired. Gus felt a twinge of proud tenderness. He'd let him listen to his favourite radio serial, then pack him off to bed.

"That all, son?"

"Yes thanks, Dad." Johnny spoke absently as he strapped books into his battered schoolbag and came and flopped in the second armchair. Gus twirled the station selector over to "Range Riders." Before the fifteen-minute session of Wild West adventuring was over Johnny slept, peaked face resting on the worn arm of the chair. His father lifted him bodily and carried him out to bed.

GUS never nagged. Next morning Johnny went off to school without a reminder about the five o'clock limit, but in his father's mind the problem smouldered slowly all day. When the after-school twitter of children told him it was after three Gus found himself straightening from the task of decking-in the cabin cruiser he was building for the local guest house and searching in the bunches of children for Johnny's rough silvery head.

By quarter to five dull anger gnawed at him. At five, when the butter-factory siren blew, he clambered down the ladder from the boat deck and strode off towards the beach known as Old Wreck. Johnny was about to learn that he meant business when he slapped the table. Finding Old Wreck deserted but for one out-of-season visitor surf fishing, only thickened his anger. The fisherman's voice came faint above the wind and rhythmic shatter of ragged waves aswirl at his feet.

"Kids? Not a sign of one since I been here, mister. Had the place to meself."

Gus thanked him and turned back across the wind-smoothed whiteness of the sand dunes. He wouldn't shame Johnny or himself by checking with any of the kids, or their parents, but he was puzzled where to search next. Clifford sprawled either side of a wide river estuary. Johnny could have hopped the punt or the ferry and be on the town side. Or he might be out at the Steen place. Suddenly he recalled his threat about visiting the school, and the spot near the schoolyard where Johnny and his gang had built a "cubby." He quickened his pace and headed for the buff-painted schoolhouse.

Emptied of the children it was a shell. No heads popped up at windows to quiz the grown-up visitor as they did when you called during school hours. Gus passed the building and peered over the picket fence into the vacant block where the boys had built the "cubby." No one was there either. He was half-way across the gravel playground to the road again when someone caught his sleeve, startling away his scowl with the surprise contact. Beside him stood a short, gipsyish-looking girl.

"Did you want somebody? I'm Elaine Colton, the fifth-grade's teacher. Can I help?"

This was luck. This dark young woman was Johnny's teacher. Now he'd get the whole business off his chest whilst he was here: all about Johnny's back-sliding at school and his late home comings.

"Maybe you can, miss. I'm Gus Ericsson — Johnny's father. Seen him about anywhere? I've had words with him about being so late home from school, and to-night was his last chance. I'm sick of him landing in too tired to eat and falling asleep over his homework. And I suppose you've noticed he's dropped back in class this last year. I have—and I know he can do better. What do you make of it? You're his teacher, aren't you?"

THE young woman drew back from him. Some look of Margaret's dark strength about her and the tightness of her voice made him ashamed of his truculence. She stayed calm.

"I make quite a lot of it, Mr. Ericsson. Come up to school with me while I collect my things, will you? We can talk about Johnny on the way. You expect a great deal of him, don't you?"

Gus went straight to the defensive.

"I'm going to make a doctor of him, if that's what you

mean. The kid's got a brain, but lately he hasn't been trying."

Elaine Colton's simple question was an accusation.

"Does Johnny want to be made a doctor?"

Gus' dull anger was at its height. He flared at the inference that he drove his child, anxious to justify his right of discipline.

"Does any child of ten know what he wants to be? And shouldn't I know what he does with himself between the time school's out and six o'clock every night?"

She dropped the armful of exercise books she was gathering together and wheeled on him.

"You mean you don't know where he spends that time, Mr. Ericsson — and you so keen on his school results? Come with me!"

She led him into the interior of the schoolhouse, motioning Gus to stop as they came to a glass-panelled door. Through it he saw Johnny pacing the aisle between the lines of desks, book in hand, eyes screwed shut and concentrating fiercely on something he was learning aloud. The woman at his elbow drew Gus back to the staff sitting-room before she spoke again in her low, assured voice.

"Look, Mr. Ericsson, you couldn't have called at a better time. You must stop forcing Johnny or you'll break his heart and his health."

"I don't force Johnny! This working after school just shows he's keen to learn. No ordinary child . . ."

The woman seized the opening.

"You're right — and you're wrong. Without knowing it, you've always forced him. Down in the primary grades you helped him, hearing his spelling and tables and so forth—and he learned quickly and remembered well. Few parents take so much interest, unluckily for us. Johnny always had the best marks . . ."

". . . and you call that 'forcing'!"

". . . always had the best marks, and you were terribly proud. That set a standard for him. Now, rather than fall short of the top marks you expect, this is what Johnny does. He's certainly no ordinary child."

"I told you. He's got the guts to study and make something of himself."

"He's got the guts all right to keep this up till something cracks. Mr. Ericsson, Johnny's not dull. I'm not trying to tell you that in a school-teacherish kind of way. But don't you understand—down in lower school what kids learn is mainly a question of repetition and drill—things like spelling and tables. Johnny's got a good memory and you helped him, so he was outstanding in his class. As he goes on, there's going to be far more to it than mere memorising. He'll have to reason abstract mathematics, weigh up scientific data, learn how to express his opinions clearly. He's feeling the strain already and beginning to doubt his own ability. And he's frightened — not of his limitations, but of disappointing you."

> NO one has success until he has the abounding life. This is made up of the many-fold activity of energy, enthusiasm and gladness. It is to spring to meet the day with a thrill at being alive. It is to go forth to meet the morning in an ecstasy of joy. It is to realise the oneness of humanity in true spiritual sympathy.
>
> —*Lillian Whiting.*

GUS wavered. A man cannot see his long-laid plans torn up before his eyes without protest.

"I don't believe all this. He likes school. He wants to go on."

The girl was groping in a desk drawer. She brought out a black exercise book labelled in Johnny's stolid roundhand, "John Ericsson," and handed it to Gus.

"Read the last page of that. Johnny wrote it to-day. Normally nobody but myself would see it. Maybe it'll convince you that what I say is right."

Gus thumbed clumsily to the last written page. It was headed: "*Composition. What I Am Going To Be.*" He read:

"*I am going to be a doctor because my father says there are never enough doctors for people like when my mother died because a doctor couldn't come. A doctor has a lot of study to do but he can do a lot of good in the end, stopping pain and curing sick people. I would like to build boats like my father but he says anybody can build boats and people need doctors more.*"

He let the woman take the book from his hands and she read aloud to him.

"'. . . anybody can build boats.' You know that isn't true, Mr. Ericsson. Anybody can't. Every man isn't born with thinking hands and eyes that can judge the grain and age of timber, and a love for the painstaking work it needs to build vessels men depend on. How long has your family been boatbuilding?"

Gus hesitated. In fact he didn't know, any further back than Great-Great-Grandfather Ericsson of Goteborg, anyway. Ericsson men had always built boats and worked in wood.

"We've always been boatbuilders, I reckon."

"Then do you hope to break the inheritance with a fixed idea of yours? Oh, I know how you feel about the scarcity of doctors for the country, after Mrs. Ericsson. But what do you think she'd rather—have Johnny successful as a boatbuilder, or unhappy trying to become a doctor? And here's just one more thing . . ."

Out of a wall cupboard she brought some wooden trays.

"These are samples of work from the woodwork class. Johnny's is far the best of them. Doesn't it convince you he's flesh of your flesh — a craftsman born to love wood and use it?"

Gus fingered his son's tray. He wondered whether he would tell the schoolteacher that Johnny'd never mentioned his woodwork classes. But it wasn't the workmanship of the intricately veneered tray that impressed him. Rather he recognised it as a near-perfect replica of the one back on the living-room sideboard that he'd made Margaret in the first year of their marriage. Here in his hands he held his son's wordless devotion for himself and his trade, passed over all this time for the sake of his own disguised ambition. He put the tray down.

"You and Johnny win. Thanks for showing me. Things'll be different now. I'll let him in amongst my tools—and we'll see."

The dark girl's face was shadowed by the winter dusk in the room but he saw her broad smile of relief.

"You'll be gentle, and not let him know about to-day?"

Gus laughed softly.

"Don't worry. To-day's over. To-night Johnny gets let off his homework. To-morrow's what we boatbuilders work for."

As he went down the school steps he whistled under his breath the old Swedish work song he'd learnt from his father. He would teach it to Johnny. ●

Up in the Morning Early

(Continued from page 6)

moral and then the milkman broke off his conversation to yell whoa in sort of raised tones to his horse which was getting bored and eager to continue its ramblings.

And the milkman said too right the country was going to the pack all right how had Walter got on yesterday had he done any good at the races and after a few more items of interest the milkman shouted hooray once or twice and departed slamming the front gate behind him with moderate force and resuming a spirited discussion with his horse.

Our garage door is one of those iron ones that runs along sideways on a sort of rail like butchers have in their shops for hanging joints of meat on and when you run it along it makes a noise like a train rumbling over an iron bridge and the car took a bit of starting so that Walter had to roar the self starter a few times but he got it out in the lane at last ready for cleaning and it was then that Thornbury appeared on his back verandah next door but one.

Thornbury and Walter had an interesting sort of long-range chat on this and that while Walter cleaned the car and it was eight-fifteen before Walter got in again for his shave and eight-forty-seven before he'd had his shower and just nine-five before he'd made a lovely pot of fresh tea and proudly taken a cup in to Beryl all pleased with himself for having allowed her to sleep in in that way.

And it was then that Walter got it in the neck and was told what a noisy brute you are you've had me awake since before six pounding round the house like an elephant and roaring like a bull with the milkman and that Thornbury brute I only get one chance a week to have a lie in and you won't even let me have that I don't want your tea you can keep your beastly tea you can——

There's no doubt about it. Women are a problem. ●

How the Brigadier Held the King

By

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

FOR a month I had lingered in the accursed village of Alamo, in Spain, and all on account of a lance-thrust in my ankle, which made it impossible for me to put my foot to the ground. There were three besides myself at first: old Bouvet, of the Hussars of Bercheny, Jacques Regnier, of the Cuirassiers, and a funny little voltigeur captain whose name I forget; but they all got well and hurried on to the front, while I sat gnawing my fingers and tearing my hair, and even, I must confess, weeping from time to time as I thought of my Hussars of Conflans, and the deplorable condition in which they must find themselves when deprived of their colonel.

Ah, that happy July day of which I speak, when first I limped to the door and stood in the golden Spanish sunshine! It was but the evening before that I had heard from the regiment. They were at Pastores, on the other side of the mountains, face to face with the English — not forty miles from me by road. But how was I to get to them? The same thrust which had pierced my ankle had slain my charger. I took advice both from Gomez, the landlord, and from an old priest who had slept that night in the inn, but neither of them could do more than assure me that there was not so much as a colt left upon the whole countryside.

The landlord would not hear of my crossing the mountains without an escort, for he assured me that El Cuchillo, the Spanish guerrilla chief, was out that way with his band, and that it meant a death by torture to fall into his hands. The old priest observed, however, that he did not think a French hussar would be deterred by that, and if I had had any doubts, they would of course have been decided by his remark.

But a horse! How was I to get one? I was standing in the doorway, plotting and planning, when I heard the clink of shoes, and, looking up, I saw a great bearded man, with a blue cloak frogged across in military fashion, coming towards me. He was riding a big black horse with one white stocking on his near foreleg.

"Halloa, comrade!" said I, as he came up to me.

"Halloa!" said he.

"I am Colonel Gerard, of the Hussars," said I. "I have lain here wounded for a month, and I am now ready to rejoin my regiment at Pastores."

"I am Monsieur Vidal, of the commissariat," he answered, "and I am myself upon my way to Pastores. I should be glad to have your company, Colonel, for I hear that the mountains are far from safe."

"Alas," said I, "I have no horse. But if you will sell me yours, I will promise that an escort of hussars shall be sent back for you."

He would not hear of it, and it was in vain that the landlord told him dreadful stories of the doings of El Cuchillo, and that I pointed out the duty which he owed to the army and to the country. He would not even argue, but called loudly for a cup of wine. I craftily asked him to dismount and to drink with me, but he must have seen something in my face, for he shook his head and then, as I approached him with some thought of seizing him by the leg, he jerked his heels into his horse's flanks, and was off in a cloud of dust.

My faith! it was enough to make a man mad to see this fellow riding away so gaily to join his beef barrels, and his brandy casks, and then to think of my five hundred beautiful hussars without their leader. I was gazing after him with bitter thoughts in my mind, when who should touch me on the elbow but the little priest whom I have mentioned.

'It is I who can help you," he said. "I am myself travelling south."

I put my arms about him and, as my ankle gave way at the same moment, we nearly rolled upon the ground together.

"Get me to Pastores," I cried, "and you shall have a rosary of golden beads." I had taken one from the Convent of Spiritu Santo. It shows how necessary it is to take what you can when you are upon a campaign, and how the most unlikely things may become useful.

"I will take you," he said, in very excellent French, "not because I hope for any reward, but because it is my way always to do what I can to serve my fellow man, and that is why I am so beloved wherever I go."

The French Colonel and the young English officer were enemies on the battlefield, friends off it, and desperate rivals over a game of cards.

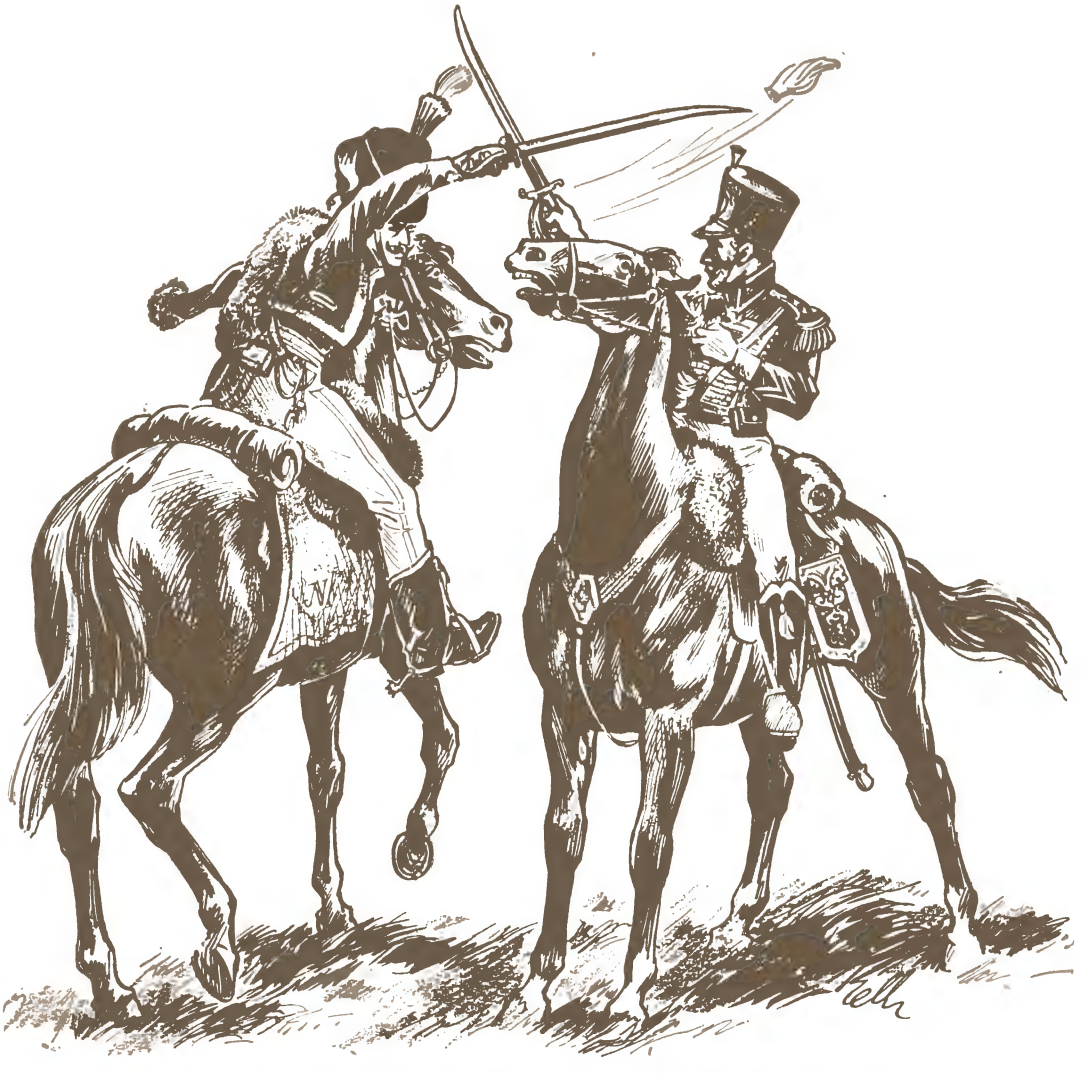
With that he led me down the village to an old cow-house, in which we found a tumble-down sort of diligence, such as they used to run early in this century, between some of our remote villages. There were three old mules, too, none of which were strong enough to carry a man, but together they might draw the coach. The sight of their gaunt ribs and spavined legs gave me more delight than the whole two hundred and twenty hunters of the Emperor which I have seen in their stalls at Fontainebleau. In ten minutes the owner was harnessing them into the coach, with no very good will, however, for he was in mortal dread of this terrible Cuchillo. It was only by promising him riches in this world, while the priest threatened him with perdition in the next, that we at last got him safely upon the box with the reins between his fingers.

THE little priest soon proved himself the best of companions in the diligence. All the way he amused me with tales of his little parish up in the mountains, and I in turn told him stories about the camp; but, my faith, I had to pick my steps, for when I said a word too much he would fidget in his seat and his face would show the pain that I had given him. And of course it is not the act of a gentleman to talk in anything but a proper manner to a religious man, though, with all the care in the world, one's words may get out of hand sometimes.

He had come from the north of Spain, as he told me, and was going to see his mother in a village of Estremadura, and as he spoke about her little peasant home, and her joy in seeing him, it brought my own mother so vividly to my thoughts that the tears started to my eyes. In his simplicity he showed me the little gifts which he was taking to her, and so kindly was his manner that I could readily believe him when he said he was loved wherever he went. He examined my own uniform with as much curiosity as a child, admiring the plume of my busby, and passing his fingers through the sable with which my dolman was trimmed. He drew my sword, too, and then when I told him how many men I had cut down with it, and set my finger on the notch made by the shoulder-bone of the Russian Emperor's aide-de-camp, he shuddered and placed the weapon under the leathern cushion, declaring that it made him sick to look at it.

Well, we had been rolling and creaking on our way whilst this talk had been going forward, and as we reached the base of the mountains we could hear the rumbling of cannon far way upon the right. This came from Massena, who was, as I knew, besieging Ciudad Rodrigo. Every mile that passed, my heart grew lighter and lighter, until I found myself shouting and singing like a young ensign fresh from St. Cyr, just to think of seeing all my fine horses and my gallant fellows once more.

As we penetrated the mountains the road grew rougher and the pass more savage. At first we had met a few muleteers, but now the whole country seemed deserted, which is not to be wondered at when you think that the French, the English, and the guerrillas had each in turn had command over it. So bleak and wild was it, one great brown wrinkled cliff succeeding another, and the pass growing narrower and narrower, that I ceased to look out, but sat in silence, thinking of this and that, of women whom I had loved and of horses which I had handled. I was suddenly brought back from my dreams, however, by observing the difficulties of my companion, who was trying with a sort of bradawl, which he had drawn out, to bore a hole through the leathern strap which held up his water flash. As he worked with twitching fingers the strap escaped his grasp, and the wooden bottle fell at my feet. I stooped to pick it up, and as I did so the priest silently leaped upon my



"His answer was a cut at my head, but I parried and shore off his white plume . . ."

shoulders and drove his bradawl into my eye!

My friends, I am, as you know, a man steeled to face every danger. When one has served from the affair of Zurich to that last fatal day of Waterloo, and has had the special medal, which I keep at home in a leathern pouch, one can afford to confess when one is frightened. It may console some of you, when your own nerves play you tricks, to remember that you have heard even me, Brigadier Gerard, say that I have been scared. And besides my terror at this horrible attack, and the maddening pain of my wound, there was a sudden feeling of loathing such as you might feel were some filthy tarantula to strike its fangs into you.

I clutched the creature in both hands, and, hurling him on to the floor of the coach, I stamped on him with my heavy boots. He had drawn a pistol from the front of his soutane, but I kicked it out of his hand, and again I fell with my knees upon his chest. Then, for the first time, he screamed horribly, while I, half blinded, felt about for the sword which he had so cunningly concealed. My hand had just lighted upon it, and I was dashing the blood from my face to see where he lay that I might transfix him, when the whole coach turned partly over upon its side, and my weapon was jerked out of my grasp by the shock.

Before I could recover myself the door was burst open, and I was dragged by the heels on to the road. But even as I was torn out on to the flint stones, and realised that thirty ruffians were standing around me, I was filled with joy, for my pelisse had been pulled over my head in the struggle and was covering one of my eyes, and it was with my wounded eye that I was seeing this gang of brigands. You see for yourself by this pucker and scar how the thin blade passed between socket and ball, but it was only at that moment, when I was dragged from the coach, that I understood that my sight was not gone for ever. The creature's intention, doubtless, was to drive it through into my brain, and indeed he loosened some portion of the inner bone of my head, so that I afterwards had more trouble from that wound than from any one of the seventeen which I have received.

They dragged me out, these sons of dogs, with curses and execrations, beating me with their fists and kicking me as I lay upon the ground. I had frequently observed that the mountaineers wore cloth swathed round their feet, but never did I imagine that I should have so much cause to be thankful for it. Presently, seeing the blood upon my head, and that I lay quiet, they thought that I was unconscious, whereas I was storing every ugly face among them into my memory, so that I might see them all safely hanged if ever my chance came round. Brawny rascals they were, with yellow handkerchiefs round their heads, and great red sashes stuffed with weapons. They had rolled two rocks across the path, where it took a sharp turn, and it was these which had torn off one of the wheels of the coach and upset us. As to this reptile, who had acted the priest so cleverly and had told me so much of his parish and his mother, he, of course, had known where the ambuscade was laid and had attempted to put me beyond all resistance at the moment when we reached it.

I cannot tell you how frantic their rage was when they drew him out of the coach and saw the state to which I had reduced him. If he had not got all his deserts, he had, at least, something as a souvenir of his meeting with Etienne Gerard, for his legs dangled aimlessly about, and though the upper part of his body was convulsed with rage and pain, he sat straight down upon his feet when they tried to set him upright. But all the time his two little black eyes, which had seemed so kindly and so innocent in the coach, were glaring at me like a wounded cat, and he spat, and spat, and spat in my direction. My faith! when the wretches jerked me on to my feet again, and when I was dragged off up one of the mountain paths, I understood that a time was coming when I was to need all my courage and resource. My enemy was carried upon the shoulders of two men behind me, and I could hear his hissing and his reviling, first in one ear and then in the other, as I was hurried up the winding track.

I suppose that it must have been for an hour that we ascended, and what with my wounded ankle and the pain from my eye, and the fear lest this wound should have spoiled my appearance, I have made no journey to which I look back with less pleasure. I have never been a good climber at any time, but it is astonishing what you can do, even with a stiff ankle, when you have a copper-coloured brigand at each elbow and a nine-inch blade within touch of your whiskers.

WE came at last to a place where the path wound over a ridge, and descended upon the other side through thick pine trees into a valley which opened to the south. In time of peace I had little doubt that the villains were all smugglers, and that these were the secret paths by which they crossed the Portuguese frontier. There were many mule tracks, and once I was surprised to see the marks of a large horse where a stream had softened the track. These were explained when, on reaching a place where there was a clearing in the fir wood, I saw the animal itself haltered to a fallen tree. My eyes had hardly rested upon it, when I recognised the great black limbs and the white near foreleg. It was the very horse which I had begged for in the morning.

What, then, had become of Commissariat Vidal? Was it possible that there was another Frenchman in as perilous a plight as myself? The thought had hardly entered my head when our party stopped and one of them uttered a peculiar cry. It was answered from among the brambles which lined the base of a cliff at one side of a clearing, and an instant later ten or a dozen more brigands came out from amongst them, and the two parties greeted each other. The newcomers surrounded my friend of the bradawl with cries of grief and sympathy, and then, turning upon me, they brandished their knives and howled at me like the gang of assassins that they were. So frantic were their gestures that I was convinced that my end had come, and was just bracing myself to meet it in a manner which should be worthy of my past reputation, when one of them gave an order and I was dragged roughly across the little glade to the brambles from which this new band had emerged.

A narrow pathway led through them to a deep grotto in the side of the cliff. The sun was already setting outside, and in the cave itself it would have been quite dark but for a pair of torches which blazed from a socket on either side. Between them there was sitting at a rude table a very singular-looking person, whom I saw instantly, from the respect with which the others addressed him, could be none other than the brigand chief who had received, on account of his dreadful character, the sinister name of El Cuchillo.

The man whom I had injured had been carried in and placed upon the top of a barrel, his helpless legs dangling about in front of him, and his cat's eyes still darting glances of hatred at me. I understood, from the snatches of talk which I could follow between the chief and him, that he was the lieutenant of the band, and that part of his duties was to lie in wait with his smooth tongue and his peaceful garb for travellers like myself. When I thought of how many gallant officers may have been lured to their death by this monster of hypocrisy, it gave me a glow of pleasure to think that I had brought his villainies to an end—though I feared it would be at the price of a life which neither the Emperor nor the army could well spare.

As the injured man, still supported upon the barrel by two comrades, was explaining in Spanish all that had befallen him, I was held by several of the villains in front of the table at which the chief was seated, and had an excellent opportunity of observing him. I have seldom seen any man who was less like my idea of a brigand, and especially of a brigand with such a reputation that in a land of cruelty he had earned so dark a nickname. His face was bluff and broad and bland, with ruddy cheeks and comfortable little tufts of side-whiskers, which gave him the appearance of a well-to-do grocer of the Rue St. Antoine. He had not any of those flaring sashes or gleaming weapons which distinguished his followers, but on the contrary he wore a good broadcloth coat like a respectable father of a family, and save for his brown leggings there was nothing to indicate a life among the mountains. His surroundings, too, corresponded with himself, and beside his snuff box upon the table there stood a great brown book, which looked like a commercial ledger. Many other books were ranged along a plank between two powder casks, and there was a great litter of papers, some of which had verses scribbled upon them. All this I took in while he, leaning indolently back in his chair, was listening to the report of his lieutenant. Having heard everything, he ordered the cripple to be carried out again, and I was left with my three guards, waiting to hear my fate. He took up his pen, and tapping his forehead with the handle of it, he pursed up his lips and looked out of the corner of his eye at the roof of the grotto.

"I suppose," said he at last, speaking very excellent French, "that you are not able to suggest a rhyme for the word Covilha."

I answered him that my acquaintance with the Spanish language was so limited that I was unable to oblige him.

"It is a rich language," said he, "but less prolific in rhymes than either the German or the English. That is why our best work has been done in blank verse, a form of compensation which is capable of reaching great heights. But I fear that such subjects are somewhat outside the range of a hussar."

I was about to answer that if they were good enough for a guerrilla, they could not be too much for the light cavalry, but he was already stooping over his half-finished verse. Presently he threw down the pen with an exclamation of satisfaction, and declaimed a few lines which drew a cry of approval from the three ruffians who held me. His broad face blushed like a young girl who receives her first compliment.

"The critics are in my favour, it appears," said he; "we amuse ourselves in our long evenings by singing our own ballads, you understand. I have some little facility in that direction, and I do not at all despair of seeing some of my poor efforts in print before long, and with 'Madrid' upon the title page, too. But we must get back to business. May I ask what your name is?"

"Etienne Gerard."

"Rank?"

"Colonel."

"Corps?"

"The Third Hussars of Conflans."

"You are young for a colonel."

"My career has been an eventful one."

"Tut, that makes it the sadder," said he, with his bland smile.

I made no answer to that, but I tried to show him by my bearing that I was ready for the worst which could befall me.

"By the way, I rather fancy that we have had some of your corps here," said he, turning over the pages of his big brown register. "We endeavour to keep a record of our operations. Here is a heading under June 24th. Have you not a young officer named Soubiron, a tall, slight youth with light hair?"

"Certainly."

"I see that we buried him upon that date."

"Poor lad!" I cried. "And how did he die?"

"We buried him."

"But before you buried him?"

"You misunderstand me, Colonel. He was not dead before we buried him."

"You buried him alive!"

For a moment I was too stunned to act. Then I hurled myself upon the man, as he sat with that placid smile of his upon his lips, and I would have torn his throat out had the three wretches not dragged me away from him. Again and again I made for him, panting and cursing, shaking off this man and that, straining and wrenching, but never quite free. At last, with my jacket torn nearly off my back and blood dripping from my wrists, I was hauled backwards in the bight of a rope and cords passed round my ankles and my arms.

"You sleek hound!" I cried. "If ever I have you at my sword's point, I will teach you to maltreat one of my lads. You will find, you bloodthirsty beast, that my Emperor has long arms, and though you lie here like a rat in its hole, the time will come when he will tear you out of it, and you and your vermin will perish together."

My faith, I have a rough side to my tongue, and there was not a hard word that I had learned in fourteen campaigns which I did not let fly at him; but he sat with the handle of his pen tapping against his forehead and his eyes squinting up at the roof as if he had conceived the idea of some new stanza. It was this occupation of his which showed me how I might get my point into him.

"You spawn!" said I; "you think that you are safe here, but your life may be as short as that of your absurd verses, and God knows that it could not be shorter than that."

Ah, you should have seen him bound from his chair when I said the words. This vile monster, who dispensed death and torture as a grocer serves out his figs, had one raw nerve, then, which I could prod at pleasure. His face grew livid, and those little bourgeois side-whiskers quivered and thrilled with passion.

"Very good, Colonel. You have said enough," he cried, in a choking voice. "You say that you have had a very distinguished career. I promise you also a very distinguished ending. Colonel Etienne Gerard of the Third Hussars shall have a death of his own."

"And I only beg," said I, "that you will not commemorate it in verse." I had one or two little ironies to utter, but he cut me short by a furious gesture which caused my three guards to drag me from the cave.

OUR interview, which I have told you as nearly as I can remember it, must have lasted some time, for it was quite dark when we came out, and the moon was shining very clearly in the heavens. The brigands had lighted a great fire of the dried branches of the fir trees; not, of course, for warmth, since the night was already very sultry, but to cook their evening meal. A huge copper pot hung over the blaze, and the rascals were lying all round in the yellow glare, so that the scene looked like one of those pictures which Junot stole out of Madrid. There are some soldiers who profess to care nothing for art and the like, but I have always been drawn towards it myself, in which respect I show my good taste and my breeding. I remember, for example, that when Lefebvre was selling the plunder after the fall of Danzig, I bought a very fine picture, called "Nymphs Surprised in a Wood," and I carried it with me through two campaigns, until my charger had the misfortune to put his hoof through it.

I only tell you this, however, to show you that I was never a mere rough soldier like Rapp or Ney. As I lay in that brigands' camp, I had little time or inclination to think about such matters. They had thrown me down under a tree, the three villains squatting round and smoking their cigarettes within hands' touch of me. What to do I could not imagine. In my whole career I do not suppose that I have ten times been in as hopeless a situation. "But courage," thought I. "Courage, my brave boy! You were not made a Colonel of Hussars at twenty-eight because you could dance a cotillon. You are a picked man, Etienne; a man who has come through more than two hundred affairs, and this little one is surely not going to be the last." I began eagerly to glance about for some chance of escape, and as I did so I saw something which filled me with great astonishment.

I have already told you that a large fire was burning in the centre of the glade. What with its glare, and what with the moonlight, everything was as clear as possible. On the other side of the glade there was a single tall fir tree which attracted my attention because its trunk and lower branches were discoloured, as if a large fire had recently been lit underneath it. A clump of bushes grew in front of it which concealed

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3-D Murder

(Continued from page 10)

Then she looked at each pair of hands, and, suddenly, at each owner's face. Her look was harsh and accusative, and the fifth woman in line, a red-head, jerked her hands spasmodically out of sight, then began to cry.

"An usherette, aren't you?" Mrs. Pym's voice was so gentle that Starr, in the background, was surprised. "Name?"

"Mary Gellner, ma'am. I didn't mean . . ."

"I think you will come with me. I want to talk to you."

Thirty minutes later the girl had been charged with murder and Starr heard what had happened.

"It was bluff," Mrs. Pym explained. "One of the staff fired a gun, and, I realised, a woman. I guessed that hoo-hah of studying hands would scare somebody out. The Gellner girl is having a baby and Pircher was her—um—friend, and ditched her."

"Charming type." Starr's voice was grim. "So he came to her cinema?"

"Regularly, and sometimes with his new girl. So Mary Gellner, who was in the Forces, got hold of a German Kalther revolver, a .22, and kept it in her uniform pocket. Pircher was alone in his usual seat this week. She chose the right time, called his name and, with her torch on him, killed him. She did not figure on him falling over the balcony, but relied on the coloured spectacles and the noise to cover her for good. Dramatic, but wronged women *are* dramatic."

"But why didn't anybody notice her?"

"Even the Lukers, when they were standing, watched the film as people do. Besides, do people ever *consciously* notice an usherette in the dark, even when her torch is on? People are conditioned, and Mary Gellner relied on that." She glared at Starr and added: "Poor child" in a voice that dared him to notice the sentiment. ●

Being shot at was an ordinary risk in the Inspector's job, but he didn't expect it to happen on a social call.

The Ordeal of Humbleby

By EDMUND CRISPIN

"IN my job," said Detective-Inspector Humbleby, "a man expects to be shot at every now and again. It's an occupational risk, like pneumoconiosis in coal mining, and when you're on duty you've obviously got to be prepared for it to crop up. But a social call on an old acquainance is quite a different matter. Here am I on my Sabbatical. I drop in to see this man I've known ever since the 1914 war. And what happens? Before I have a chance to as much as open my mouth and ask him how he is, he snatches a damned great revolver out of his pocket and lets it off at me. Well, I was petrified. Anyone would be. I was so astonished I literally couldn't move."

"He doesn't seem to have hit you, though." From the depths of the armchair in his rooms at St. Christopher's, Gervase Fen, University Professor of English Language and Literature, regarded his guest with a clinical air. "I see no wound," he elaborated.

"There is no wound. Three times he fired," said Humbleby dramatically, "and three times he missed. Which, of course, makes it all the odder."

"Why 'of course'? I've always understood that revolvers——"

"I say 'of course' because Garstin-Walsh, whom I'm speaking of, is a retired Army man: a brevet-rank colonel, to be precise. . . . Yes, I know what you're going to tell me. You're going to tell me that Army men seldom actually use revolvers, even though they may carry them; and that consequently it's naive to expect them to be good marksmen. Agreed. But the trouble in this instance is that Garstin-Walsh has always made a hobby of shooting in general—he's the sort of man it's impossible to visualise outside the context of dogs and guns and an interest in dahlias—and of pistol shooting in particular. That's why I'm so certain he missed me on purpose: at a yard's range even *I* could hardly go wrong. . . . But perhaps I'd better begin at the beginning."

Fen nodded gravely. "Perhaps you had."

"As you know," said Humbleby, "I was in Military Intelligence during the 1914 war; and it was while I was investigating an unimaginative piece of sabotage at an arms depot near Loos that I first met Garstin-Walsh, who at that time was a captain in the Supply Corps. It'd be an exaggeration to say that we became close friends — and looking back on it, I can't quite see why we should have become friends at all, because our temperaments weren't at all alike, and we had very few interests in common.

"Still, for some obscure reason we did in fact get on well together; and I think that much of his attraction for me must have been due to his complete humourlessness —we were all a bit hysterical in those days, whether we knew it or not, and a man who never laughed was unexpectedly *restful*.

"We used to meet, then, as often as we could; and after the Armistice we kept up a sporadic correspondence and managed some sort of reunion once or twice every year. Then eighteen months ago Garstin-Walsh retired and went to live at a village called Uscombe, which is a few miles from Exeter; and since I was staying with my sister at Exmouth, and hadn't seen him for some considerable time, I decided, the day before yesterday, to drive over and pay him a surprise visit.

"I left Exmouth immediately after breakfast and got to Uscombe about ten-thirty. Uscombe's not as cut off from the rest of the world as some Devon villages, because it's only a quarter of a mile from the main London road; but in all other respects it's fairly typical—settled to some extent by middle-class 'foreigners,' I mean, with an unsuccessful preparatory boarding school in a tumble-down manor house, and a church tower scheduled dangerous; you know the sort of place. I hadn't been there before, so I stopped at one of the village shops to enquire for Garstin-Walsh's house. And the way they looked at me, as they gave me directions, was the first intimation I had that anything was wrong.

"The house proved to be a nice, trim, up-to-date little red-brick villa beyond the church, with lots of chrysanthemums in the garden and a carefully weeded front lawn; so that was all right. But then the trouble started. The painters were in, for one thing; an Exeter C.I.D. Inspector was hanging about the hall, for another; and an undeniably dead body was in process of being removed by a mortuary van. I need hardly tell you that if I'd known about all this I should have gone back to Exmouth and tried again some other day; but by the time the situation became clear I'd rung, and been let in by the housekeeper, and so couldn't very well escape without positive incivility.

"Garstin-Walsh was still upstairs dressing. But the Exeter man, Jourdain he was called, had heard me give my

name to the housekeeper, and lost no time in introducing himself. 'You'll be curious,' he said dogmatically, 'about that body they've just taken away.' I denied this, but it was no good, he insisted on telling me about the affair just the same. And stripped of inessentials, the story I heard, while we waited in the hall for Garstin-Walsh to come down, was as follows:

"A year previously, the ramshackle cottage near Garstin-Walsh's house had been rented by one Saul Brebner, he whose remains were at present *en route* for the Exeter City Mortuary. A powerful, malignant, drunken, slovenly man of about fifty was Brebner, and the people of Uscombe had gone in fear of him almost from the day of his arrival. He was without family, lived alone in squalor, had money in spite of working not at all, and divided his time fairly evenly between poaching and *The Three Crowns*. The police kept an eye on him, of course, but he succeeded in steering clear of them. And the only person in the village who ever had a good word to say for him was, surprisingly enough, Garstin-Walsh.

"That there was a reason for this the village soon discovered: Brebner had been Garstin-Walsh's batman in the 1914 war, and it was realised that Garstin-Walsh's toleration of the creature derived from this. However, the toleration wasn't by any means mutual: Brebner made no secret of his loathing for Garstin-Walsh, and from time to time, when in liquor, was heard to hint that there were phases of the colonel's career which would not bear investigation.

"The village, which quite liked Garstin-Walsh, discounted these innuendoes as the vapourings of malice, and even when Brebner became more specific, referring to misappropriation of supplies in France, refused to take him seriously. Indeed, on the night of the incident which wrote *finis* to Brebner's unlovely existence, he was so vituperative about Garstin-Walsh in the public bar of *The Three Crowns* that there was very nearly a riot, and when he left the pub at closing time — half-past ten — he was dangerously enraged as well as, what was normal, dangerously drunk.

"Garstin-Walsh reached home that evening at about a quarter to eleven (I'm referring, you understand, to what to me, visiting him, was the previous evening). He'd spent the day acting as starter at the village sports, had dined at the Vicarage, and afterwards had worked with the Vicar at the parish accounts; and he got back to his house just in time to meet his solicitor on the doorstep, the said solicitor having driven there, on urgent business, from Exeter. Well, they went into the study, a large room on the ground floor, and got on with whatever it was they had to discuss. And according to the solicitor, a respectable old party named Weems, it was exactly five to eleven when the french windows burst open and Brebner, carrying a double-barrelled shotgun, lurched into the room.

"It was all over in a moment. Brebner levelled the gun at Garstin-Walsh and fired off one barrel. But he was pretty far gone, and the pellets spattered the room without touching their target. The second barrel remained. Steadying himself, Brebner aimed again. And Garstin-Walsh, grabbing up the pistol which he'd been using all day to start races, and which he'd reloaded immediately on his return, fired just in time to save his own life. It was good shooting, partly because the end of the room where Brebner stood was in semi-darkness, and partly because Garstin-Walsh, according to Weems' deposition, was fairly thoroughly unnerved. Brebner staggered, dropped the shotgun, and collapsed on the carpet with a bullet in his head.

"Well, the village constable was summoned; and since Brebner, though unconscious, was still just alive, a doctor was summoned too. The doctor refused to have Brebner moved, and Garstin-Walsh was forced to allow him to stay in the study, with a nurse to look after him, until next morning at nine o'clock he died there without recovering consciousness."

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"Fired just in time to save his own life . . ."

THREE FATHER CHRISTMASES WERE A FEW TOO MANY, EVEN FOR HOLT'S SPRINGS, CENTRAL AUSTRALIA. BUT WHEN A FOURTH TURNED UP . . .

Father Christmas Galore

By SIDNEY HOBSON COURTIER

To: Superintendent of Police, Darwin, N.T.
From: David Menarby, Constable, Officer-in-Charge, Police Station, Holt's Springs, N.T.
Subject: Alleged Recent Tumults at Holt's Springs.

Sir,

I acknowledge your memo of 30th ult., drawing attention to complaints from W. Tozer, J.P., and the Holt's Springs Mothers' Club that I committed breaches of police discipline in:—

(a) Conniving at riotous disturbances at Holt's Springs School on occasion of the Christmas break-up party, 17th ult., and failing to quell same.

(b) Neglecting to detain persons responsible and have them charged under Police Offences Act.

(c) Being intoxicated while on duty at said function.

SIR, to (c) I give an unqualified denial. I wasn't on duty at said function, being present in my capacity as parent of two children, pupils at the school, both of same taking part in the Christmas programme arranged by the teacher, Miss Helen Forrest, and receiving prizes for highest marks in their respective grades. Miss Helen Forrest will corroborate. Further, I wasn't intoxicated, consuming only two bottles of beer for the evening, there being sixty bottles present to thirty men, which fact, taken in conjunction with a night temperature of 92 degrees, speaks for my sobriety. Besides, sir, my wife, with whom you are acquainted, was also in attendance at said function.

It is my opinion that this charge stems from the jealousy of W. Tozer, J.P., whose children did not obtain highest marks.

As for (a) and (b), the following will demonstrate the absurdity of these charges.

Miss Helen Forrest is the first woman teacher to come to Holt's Springs School, all former teachers being men. Not only is Miss Forrest a young woman of highest calibre, but there is a marked shortage of marriageable females in Holt's Springs, where statistics show males outnumber females three to one. Miss Forrest being neither blonde, brunette nor redhead, but, as Rev. Morris says, possessing the best qualities of all three, I don't have to explain that competition to gain her notice was keen.

The main contenders came to be Messrs. Steve McCracken, John ("Joker") Lacey and Hank Gorman, whom you no doubt recall, sir, from your numerous visits to this district. You will remember Mr. McCracken by his prominent nose. Mr. Lacey will come to mind from possessing the biggest hands and beet outside a baboon, and no one can forget Mr. Gorman's weird black eyebrows, said ornaments looking like misplaced moustaches. Mr. McCracken is owner of Holt's Springs cattle station, a property of a thousand square miles; Mr. Lacey is chief of the Lacey Land Transport Company. and Mr. Gorman runs the Lost Lode string of mines. They are, therefore, gentlemen of standing in the community and not depraved ruffians as asserted by W. Tozer, J.P., and the Mothers' Club.

Being a sensible girl, Miss Forrest did not hasten to make her choice. She maintained a strict neutrality, which naturally spurred Messrs. McCracken, Gorman and Lacey to strenuous action. This action took a number of forms, one of which consisted of regularly lining the school children up and advising them to behave correctly or else they'd get quilted good and proper. And even if some of the kids did take a lam or two across the seat of the pants, it was no more than they deserved, the Holt's Springs children being bits of young devils, my own not excepted. However, W. Tozer, J.P., considered corporal punishment outside Messrs. Lacey, Gorman and McCracken's field of operations.

Further, sir, said gentlemen became faithful patrons of the Mothers' Club square dancing parties, held to raise funds for the school. It is admitted they sometimes got to scuffling over who'd be Miss Forrest's partner, but it was nothing serious. No need for me to take action, except give them a word in season, as Rev. Morris says.

THESE small differences, however, caused trouble in the combined meeting of the Parents' Association and the Mothers' Club, called to arrange details of the Christmas break-up party. The only distinction between the two bodies is that fathers can belong to one but not to the other, though some of the fathers, if they got their due, ought to be honorary members of the Mothers' Club, one of same being W. Tozer, J.P., an old woman if ever there was one. This W. Tozer, J.P., is Holt's Springs' storekeeper. You'll remember him, sir, a long slab of a man with an important voice.

At the combined meeting, W. Tozer rose to complain about the school being ruined by undesirable characters hanging around all the time, distracting the teacher and pupils from work and causing trouble at the square dancing.

Miss Forrest began to look flustered, but the chairman of the meeting came to her rescue by asking if W. Tozer meant him. The chairman was Rev. James Morris, probably *ex officio* as he hasn't the slightest claim to be a parent. You mightn't have met Rev. Morris on your inspections here, sir, as he has a big charge, nearly a quar-

ter of a million square miles of country and he could have been away. He's a young giant of a fellow and looks more like a bushman than a parson. He's esteemed by all, even by the characters he flattens when he catches them blaspheming. Perhaps you've met him after all, sir.

"No, I don't mean you, padre," said W. Tozer — I quote his exact words, sir. "It's your job to deal out the straight an' narrer. No," he said warmly, "I mean Steve McCracken an' Hank Gorman an' Joker Lacey. You'd think they'd have something better to do than hang around the school an' drive Miss Forrest and the kids silly. What's the school got to do with them? Why the hell — er, the heck can't they get married an' raise a family themselves if they want kids to belt?"

"Probably," I said, "that's just what they're aiming at."

Helen blushed. She blushes beautifully, which is why I made the remark. But you're not to misunderstand me, sir. My wife doesn't. You'll notice her name isn't one of the signatories to the complaints from Holt's Springs.

"Look here, Bill," said Rev. Morris. "What's all this got to do with the Christmas break-up?"

"Blast me hide!" snorted W. Tozer. "Them lunatics'll ruin the show. They've ruined the square dancin', fightin' to see who'll have Miss Forrest. Should've been thrown into clink a dozen times if Dave had done his duty."

"They were doing no harm," I said, and I tried to persuade W. Tozer to see the matter in a calmer light.

But, sir, he couldn't be reasoned with and what does he do but move that we ban Messrs. McCracken, Lacey and Gorman from the Christmas party and if they do show up they get thrown out immediately to prevent further trouble.

I resisted this motion, sir, as being silly, tyrannical and impossible to implement. Rev. Morris, I'm glad to say, strongly supported me, but, in spite of all we could say, the motion was carried, for most of the mothers present considered W. Tozer had something, though I can't truthfully state whether or not Helen's being a particularly pretty girl had anything to do with it.

INFORMED of the ban, Messrs. Lacey, McCracken and Gorman laughed and promptly made plans to crash the party. Which brings me to the accusation that I connived at riotous disturbances. Nothing of the sort, sir. Steve, Hank and Joker each consulted me—separately, of course, and in strictest confidence — as to whether the steps they proposed to take were illegal. I informed them they were quite within the law, and that's all I did

Nor was anything they proposed to do illegal. Take Steve McCracken as an example, sir.

Steve made careful inquiry concerning the programme for the great night. He discovered that, while there would be plenty of recitations, games, Christmas carols, prizes and ice cream, no provision had been made for a visit by Father Christmas. He thereupon wrote south to a city store and ordered a Father Christmas outfit and toys for every child in Holt's Springs, plus a few extra in case a new infant or two arrived during the interim. The whole cargo he asked to be air-freighted to him at speed, encased in a strong, securely fastened box, unmarked in order to prevent premature disclosure of the contents.

I ask, sir, was there anything illegal in that? As you will see, the ideas of Hank and Joker were just as innocuous.

On the night of the party, Steve drove in from his homestead and parked his car some way out of the town. He proceeded on foot to a clump of trees near the school where he changed into his Father Christmas costume. It was a hot, moonlight night, sir; real Christmas weather. Holt's Springs lay peacefully among its flat-topped hills. All round, as Rev. Morris says, the sand lay deep and crisp and even. The school

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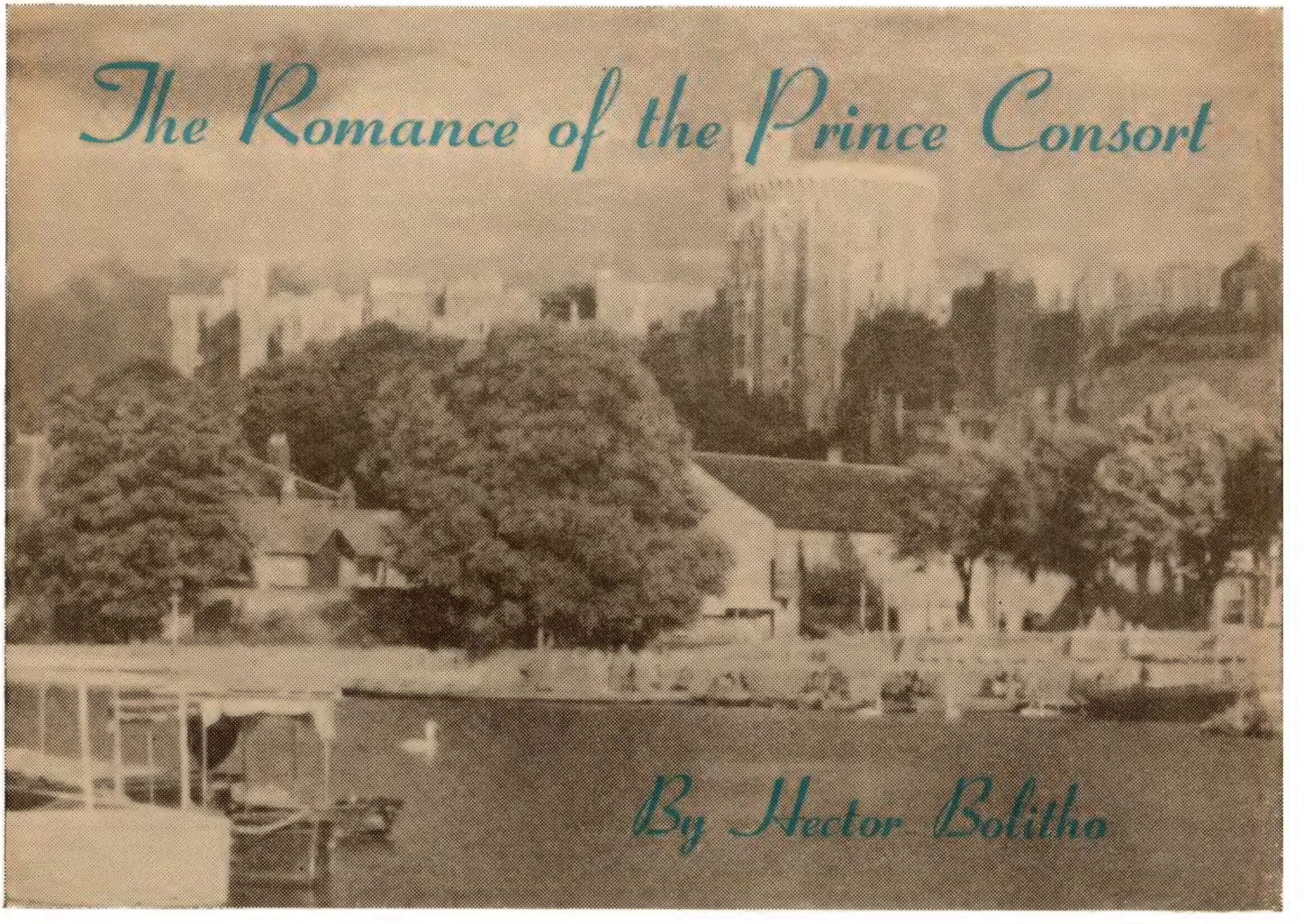
"Wheeling like one man, Steve and Joker uttered cries of grief and pain. There stood a third Father Christmas, whose black, terrific eyebrows identified him as Hank Gorman . . ."

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were the Queen's most famous ancestors



Russia had declared war on Turkey in order to seize the Dardanelles. Great Britain and France were determined that this should not happen. Wild rumours spread through England, where, despite all his efforts, Prince Albert had not been able to make himself popular. It was said that he was the friend of Russia, working against England, and the slander spread until a crowd gathered outside the Tower of London, where, rumour declared, he was to be imprisoned for treason. Then the House of Commons met, the Prince's name was cleared, and on 29th March, 1854, war was declared on Russia. Victoria and Albert went to sea in the royal yacht to speed the British navy on its way to the Crimea.

THERE are fifty big volumes of the memoranda written by Prince Albert, and the Queen, during the Crimean War. The Secretary of State was harassed almost every day by suggestions and questions from Buckingham Palace.

"What sort of muskets are there *here*?" "What is the force of artillery left in the country of men and horses?" "What is the Naval Force at home?" "How much serviceable ammunition is there?"

Queen Victoria's reactions to the war against Russia were simple: she wrote, "I regret exceedingly not to be a man and be able to fight. . . ."

Prince Albert was more practical. He had written of war, "The poor soldiers always do their duty in the most brilliant manner; but as soon as matters come again into the hands of politicians and diplomats, everything is again spoiled and confused." He complained to his brother, "We have much trouble with the Ministry. . . . Parliament and the Press have suddenly become born generals. . . . Could we only take Sebastopol."

Many names were to be added to the story before this victory: Alma, Balaclava and Inkerman worked their havoc on the army; the weary months passed and winter came, with death and suffering for the soldiers. The flow of memoranda went on: Prince Albert urged the Prime Minister to form a foreign legion. "The army must be increased," he wrote.

The challenging boast of the Tsar, that Sebastopol would "never be taken," brought Prince Albert and the once-hated "Firebrand Palmerston" closer together, for they were shocked by the tardiness of Lord Aberdeen's conduct of the war.

This new sympathy between them was opportune: in February, 1855, Lord Palmerston kissed Queen Victoria's hand as Prime Minister. From then, the fortunes of war changed; and by the summer there was such confidence in ultimate victory that the Queen and Prince Albert took their children to the quiet of Balmoral.

THEIR exciting new Scottish castle was built at last: the towers rose above the solemn conifers; the tartan carpets were spread, and an incredible suite of furniture, made of antlers, had arrived

Here is the second part of their story, told by a celebrated Royal biographer.

as a present from Coburg. The Queen and the Prince were pleased with everything —even with Lord Palmerston.

This first stay in the Scottish castle of their own creation ended in gallant splendour. On 8th September, Sebastopol fell. On a hill near the castle was a lofty wood pile which had been waiting a year for this heartening news. Prince Albert left his desk and walked into the cool evening air: he took a torch from one of the Highlanders and set the beacon alight: then, with rare abandon — watched by the Queen from a window — he took part in "a veritable Witch's dance, supported by whisky."

Prince Albert returned to London and fresh tasks associated with the war. The dockyards and arsenals were working as never before, but there were grumbles over the slow advance of the army. New generals were needed; and when General Simpson resigned, from a sense of his own deficiency, Lord Palmerston wrote to Prince Albert of the difficulty of finding an officer "against whom nothing can be said" to assume command.

The Prince suggested that the army be divided into two Army Corps, each under the command of a senior officer of high position, and subject to the general command of the Commander-in-Chief. Lord Palmerston wrote, "I and all the other members of the Cabinet feel greatly obliged to Your Royal Highness for having suggested an arrangement which had not occurred to any of us."

The Prince was reaching the apex of his cold, diligent, unerring talents, but there was no note of pleasure: in his diary he complained, "I have endured frightful torture. I continue to suffer terribly." Rheumatism was crippling him.

PEACE came in April, 1856, and the Queen, with Prince Albert, became the focus for all rejoicing.

Two miles of ships were aligned for the Naval Review at Spithead, and 15,000 men were drawn up on the plain at Aldershot to see the Queen ride past. The soldiers flung their helmets and shakoes towards the sky and the dragoons waved their glittering sabres in the sun. Aldershot rang with the cry, "God Save the Queen."

Beside her, in these celebrations of victory, were her husband—the silent maker of much that the Queen had become—and their eldest son and daughter.

The Prince of Wales was now 15—"a slender, fair boy with a frank, open countenance," who was his father's most bitter disappointment. Prince Albert had tried, and failed, to make his pleasure-loving, charming son into a scholar. "Life is composed of duties," his parents warned the boy. The Prince of Wales tried to force himself into this forbidding state of mind, but his nature rebelled.

Prince Albert's joy was his eldest daugher, Princess Victoria, who later became Empress Frederick of Germany. The romance which led to this unhappy role had begun as a graceful episode at Balmoral —mixed in with the celebrations of the victory at Sebastopol.

"Vicky" had met Prince Frederick William of Prussia at the opening of the Great Exhibition, and, in 1855, although she was not yet 15, the Prince came to Britain again to ask permission to marry her. He was a serious, good, young man, full of awe for Prince Albert, and most acceptable as a bridegroom.

He went to stay at Balmoral, and one afternoon, when they were out riding together, the Prince spurred his horse forward in the narrow track and leaned down to pick a sprig of white heather, which he placed in the Princess's hand. Encouraged by her smile, he asked her to marry him. She consented, but when she arrived back in the castle, she hurried to her mother and shed "an abundance of tears."

"The marriage cannot be thought of until she is seventeen," wrote Prince Albert. In the meantime, he prepared his daughter's mind for the tasks that would fall to her in Prussia. Hour after hour they sat, and he enjoyed her eager reception of all he told her, as much as he deplored his son's "bald, ungrammatical and badly planned essays" and the way he groaned over his books.

The alarming episodes of the late 'fifties brought Prince Albert more opportunities for wise judgments. When friendship between France and Britain was threatened in 1857, he wrote Napoleon III a letter of such force that Lord Clarendon vowed it would "open the Emperor's eyes." When the Emperor stayed at Osborne, where he walked and talked with Prince Albert, he said afterwards, of the Prince, "One goes away from him . . . more disposed to do good."

New fears and problems came with the Mutiny in India, and an attack on the life of Napoleon III, early in 1858, by conspirators who had hatched their plot in England. French officers urged the Emperor to attempt the invasion of England. Londoners, who had so recently cheered Napoleon III during his visit to England, changed their passions overnight: 20,000 of them gathered in Hyde Park and cried, "Down with the French."

Prince Albert worked on: he bemoaned the folly of human behaviour, deprecated the intensity of human passion, and tried to lessen both with his theories. He had barely noted the honour that came to him in September, 1857, when Queen Victoria gave him the title of Prince Consort, without consulting Parliament. He wrote to his brother, "This ought to have been done, as you thought yourself, at our wedding." Melancholy and ill-health claimed so much of him that honours and achievement had lost their delight. "I get on pretty well," he complained, "in spite of a weak stomach with which I came into this world, and which I shall take with me to the grave."

When he was appointed Master of Trinity House, he immediately showed interest in the plight of the ballast-heavers, and raised the standard of their life and employment so that they blessed his name.

They wrote to Queen Victoria, after the Prince Consort died:

Prince Albert at the height of his fame.

"Before he came to our rescue, we could only get work through a body of riverside publicans and middlemen, who made us drink before they would give us a job. . . . The consequence was that we were in a pitiable state. We got no help till we sent our appeal to your late Royal Consort. . . . He at once listened to us . . . he could put himself down from the throne he shared to the wretched home of us poor men. . . . At once our wrongs were redressed and the system

that had ruined us swept away."

After this the ballast-heavers called him "Albert the Good."

PRINCESS VICTORIA was married on 24th January, 1858. Queen Victoria felt, during the ceremony, as if she herself "were being married" all over again. She noted the dresses: her mother, the Duchess of Kent, now so old and mellow, looked "so handsome in violet velvet trimmed with ermine": and the bride, their "darling Flower," looked "very touching and lovely," with the bridesmaids, "like a cloud of maidens," hovering about her.

For the bride, and the Prince Consort, emotions ran deeper. After the brief honeymoon at Windsor, the Princess clung to her mother and cried, "I think it will kill me to take leave of dear Papa." Of all the big family, she was the one the Prince Consort loved most: she alone was the full companion of his heart and mind.

He went to Gravesend with the bride and bridegroom, to say "Au Revoir." When they came to the river, snow was falling and they shivered as they stood on the wharf. The decorations sagged and the young girls who had come to strew petals before the bride had to paddle through the slush.

Princess Victoria went on board: she did not dare appear on deck again to wave to her father.

He waited until the ship was out of sight; then he went back to Buckingham Palace, and, with unusual candour, he wrote to his daughter, "My heart was very full when yesterday you leaned your forehead on my breast to give vent to your tears. I am not of a demonstrative nature, and therefore you cannot know how dear you have always been to me."

This revelation of the Prince Consort's feelings was brief: his role was in political history — not the history of the human heart. He watched the tragedy of the Indians, a people who were, he said, incapable "of conquering independence for themselves"; and he wrote letters of advice to his daughter in Berlin—after her warm reception—"The public, just because it was rapturous and enthusiastic, will now become minutely critical and take you to pieces anatomically. This is to be kept in view."

In the following summer, the Prince Consort went to Germany, with Queen Victoria, to be with their daughter before her first baby was born. The Princess was still well enough to play duets with her father in the evening and to share albums of pictures with him sitting on a sofa. The messengers with dispatch boxes from Whitehall intruded even on this domestic scene: one day they arrived with the draft of the Indian Proclamation.

The Prince Consort and the Queen thought the phrasing too harsh: as it was a "female sovereign" speaking to "a hundred million Eastern people on assuming the direct government over them," the Proclamation should "breathe feelings of generosity, benevolence and religious toleration." Changes were made in the Proclamation. Then the Queen joined her daughter again, noting that she was "low and nervous." "God knows, I felt the same," she wrote.

Duties called her back to England and she regretted that she could not be with her daughter "at that very critical moment, when every other mother goes to her child." The Prince Consort's diary does not reveal his feelings: he also returned to England and to the last anxieties of his life.

THERE is a theme of mistrust through most of the Prince Consort's references to Napoleon III. "He has been born and bred a conspirator," the Prince wrote to Lord Malmesbury. His opinion was confirmed soon after the Emperor of Austria declared war on the King of Sardinia, in April, 1859.

Queen Victoria had written to Napoleon III, of the "sorrow" she would suffer if he joined in this "renewal of war in Europe." But the Emperor of the French had an army to employ and his own ambitions to satisfy; his soldiers marched to the aid of the Sardinians on 26th April and gained their first victory over the Austrians at Magenta. Then came the decisive victory at Solferino, and the threat of war spreading and bringing Prussia in on the Austrian side. But the contestants laid down their guns and the Peace of Villafranca was signed on 11th July.

Napoleon III returned to Paris, as leader of a strong and victorious army, and the old fear of French invasion was awakened in Britain. In her speech from the throne, Queen Victoria asked for one million pounds to put all the Navy under steam power; once more there was threat of a war that never came.

Five years before, the Prince Consort would have met this new challenge with ideas and memoranda; now, he wrote of failing health and energies. "I believe worry over political affairs . . . is chiefly to blame for it," he complained.

He wrote to his daughter of "this suffering and difficult world." Then, the curious self-analysis, "I have absolutely nothing to reproach myself for."

He turned to one more task: the Prime Minister had asked him, in view of his being "so well acquainted with Germany," to "furnish" him "with some clue to our future policy in regard to that country."

IN May, 1860, when Queen Victoria celebrated her birthday at Osborne, she wrote, "Where could I point to another woman who after 20 years of such marital felicity still possesses it? My dearly-beloved Albert shows me not only as much affection and kindness as ever, but as much love and tenderness as on the first day of our marriage. . . ." There had been "dancing and merriment, just like nine years ago," and she was delighted because her "dear" mother was able to join in everything.

The Queen, vigorous and healthy, and unable to comprehend sickness and melancholia, might have been perplexed in later years if she read a letter the Prince Consort had written to his daughter in Germany, about this time. He was "tortured" by pain and work; when he went to see the donkey employed in a treadmill at Carisbrooke, he wrote afterwards, "The donkey . . . is my true counterpart. He, too, would rather munch thistles in the Castle moat . . . small are the thanks he gets for his labours."

The Prince Consort had almost two more years to live. During this time, he went through the greatest change of mind and heart in all his life. He had never been interested — except for passing moments — in the affairs of America, or of Canada, Australia and New Zealand. His mind had been trained to play the old game of European diplomatic chess—and his interests remained there until early in 1860, when his eldest son went to Canada to open a bridge across the St. Lawrence, and Prince Alfred went to South Africa to open the new breakwater at Capetown.

Now came a flood of letters telling the Prince about his sons, especially the Prince of Wales — delighting the Canadians, crossing the border at Niagara Falls, staying at the White House, and, on 3rd October, planting a chestnut tree beside Washington's tomb at Mount Vernon.

For these last months of his life, the Prince Consort seemed almost to forget Europe. He read of his wayward son, conquering all hearts in Canada. "There is scarcely a man or woman who can speak of him without tears," wrote the wife of the Archdeacon of St. Johns, Newfoundland. "The rough fishermen and their wives are quite wild about him," she added.

The Prince Consort wrote to Stockmar, "Bertie is generally pronounced the most perfect product of nature."

Now he had the Canadian and American newspapers to read, with their vigorous enthusiasms, in place of the sour prognostications of Europe. It was fitting that his interests should swing thus, from the old world to the new, for it was in the new world that he was to achieve the greatest moral victory of his career, in the hour before his death.

But, before this episode, there was grief, and a sad preparation in the Prince's mind for his own death.

As the greyness of winter closed about him, the Prince Consort seemed rooted in gloom. He could not sleep; his gums were swollen and the nerves in his cheek were inflamed. But he worked on, admitting, nevertheless, that in a crisis, he would have no great will to live.

He wrote to his daughter, "I was too miserable yesterday to be able to hold a pen." In another letter, written at Christmas, he pleaded, "Oh, if you, with Fritz and the children were only with us."

Then this grave sentence: "Prejudice walking to and fro in flesh and blood is my horror, and, alas, a phenomenon so common; and people plume themselves so much upon their prejudices, as signs of decision of character and greatness of mind, nay, of true patriotism; and all the while they are simply the product of narrowness of intellect and narrowness of heart."

The last year began. "I am tired, I am tired," the Prince complained. "I can't write any more. I have so much to do, so much to console and see after." Then, in his diary, "My sufferings are frightful."

There was one figure near him from whom he might have learned a lesson in physical courage. The Duchess of Kent —then aged seventy-five—was also ill and in terrible pain. But, when they all sat together after dinner, she would cross to the pianoforte and play — with her bandaged

hands—old ballads and tunes that reminded the Prince of his boyhood in Coburg.

In February, 1861, she could play no longer; the Queen and the Prince hurried to Frogmore to be with her, until she died.

QUEEN VICTORIA wrote afterwards, "I knelt before her, kissed her dear hand and placed it next my cheek . . . I heard each hour strike, the cock crow, the dogs barking at a distance. . . . At four, I went down again. All still—nothing to be heard but the heavy breathing, and the striking, at every quarter, of the old repeater, a large watch in a tortoiseshell case which had belonged to my poor father." At half-past nine in the morning, "fainter and fainter grew the breathing," until "at last it ceased."

Lady Augusta Bruce, the old Duchess' most loved lady, was there. Next day she watched the Prince Consort, and wrote, "Well, our beloved one knew his heart. Could you have seen his tears, could you see his sorrow now — his fondness for the Queen . . . I never saw such tact as his. Oh! he is one in a million—well might she (the Duchess) love him as she did. I was so struck with his appreciation of her. It was so true, and for one who is supposed to place intellect and reasoning powers above all, so remarkable."

In April, 1861, the Civil War began in America. Prince Albert had to think, not of frontiers between Austria and Italy, but of the immense frontier between the Northern States and Canada.

Late in October the Court moved to Windsor. The Queen continued in her satisfied happiness, unable to realise the sadness of her husband's nature; only half able to comprehend what he meant when he said to her, "I do not cling to life. You do; but I set no store by it. If I knew that those I love were well cared for, I should be quite ready to die to-morrow. . . . If I had a severe illness, I should give up at once."

The "severe illness" came, on 22nd November, after he had driven over to Sandhurst where he inspected the cadets in "terrific rain." He complained, in his diary, "Am full of rheumatic pains, and feel thoroughly unwell. Have scarcely closed my eyes for the last fortnight."

Next day he travelled to Cambridge to see his eldest son—the heir whose nature and interests were beyond his father's understanding and sympathies. When the Prince Consort returned to Windsor, the doctors decided that he had influenza.

On 28th November news came of the boarding of the British ship, *Trent*, by an armed guard from an American man-of-war. A round shot, followed by a shell, had been fired across the bows of the British ship.

This violation of neutrality alarmed England, as only France had alarmed her in recent years. Eight thousand troops were sent to Canada and a despatch was drafted in the Foreign Office—a demand for apologies and reparations.

The document arrived at Windsor on the evening of 30th November. The Prince Consort turned over the pages and said that he thought the language angry and defiant. He sat up, in spite of his fever, and re-wrote the main part of the despatch, adding a note —in the Queen's name — expressing "a hope" that the American captain had not acted "under instructions," or, if he had, "that he misapprehended them."

Then the wise, quiet phrase, "H.M.'s Govt. are unwilling to believe that the U.S. Govt. intended wantonly to put an insult upon this country."

NEXT morning, the Prince Consort handed the rewritten despatch to the Queen, saying, "I am so weak, I have scarcely been able to hold the pen."

It has been said, and taught in American schools, that the Prince Consort's "wording" of the despatch saved Britain and America from the folly of war.

On the morning of this last duty the Queen saw that the Prince "looked very wretched and ill"; but he went to Chapel and "insisted on going through all the kneeling." Next morning, the doctors agreed that he was suffering from a "feverish sort of influenza." Then Dr. Jenner came and decided that the Prince had typhoid fever.

On the morning of 14th December, the Queen went into her husband's room at seven o'clock. She recorded every detail in her Journal. "It was a bright morning, the sun just rising and shining brightly. The room had the sad look of night-watching, the candles burnt down to their sockets, the doctors looking anxious. I went in, and never can I forget how beautiful my darling looked lying their with his face lit up by the rising sun. . . ."

In the evening, she went to him again—but she had to creep into the next room, in a *"terrible burst of misery."* She cried, "The country; oh, the country. I could perhaps bear my own misery, but the poor country."

The Prince Consort died that night. The Queen whispered, "Oh, yes, this is death. I know it," and she sank back into the arms of her ladies.

They carried her from the room and for some minutes she was dazed.

Forty years were to pass, in doubt and conflict, before the Queen died at Osborne. But two forces never wavered during her long widowhood — her moral courage, and her trust in one sentence out of the many wise ones to which she had listened.

For the rest of her life she believed what her husband had once said to her: "We don't know in what state we shall meet again, but that we shall recognise each other and be together in eternity — I am perfectly certain." ●

Victoria and Ablert at the time of their wedding.

nice day for a baby

By SHIRLEY JACKSON

MRS. RIVERS hesitated at her own front door, her coat and hat on, her hand on the doorknob. "You're sure?" she said nervously. "I can easily tell them to go on without me."

"Mother," said her elder daughter patiently, "they're waiting."

Mrs. Rivers smiled and shrugged but still hesitated. "I don't mind not going," she said.

A car honked outside and Mrs. Rivers said: "You'll phone me if there's any need, Laura?" She turned urgently towards her younger daughter, as though she had not said these words fifty times since ten o'clock that morning.

"Everything will be perfectly all right," Laura said, as she had said every time. "Marian can lie down all afternoon and I'll be in the house, and I am just about old enough to use a telephone! If anything should happen I'll ring you at once. I know the doctor's telephone number and I am seventeen and I am quite capable of taking care of——"

"You're only *just* seventeen. You're still a *child*. Why, when I was seventeen——"

"I know, mother," said Laura patiently. "But times have changed. Girls grow up quicker now."

"They think they do," Mrs. Rivers sighed. "Anyway, it is *right* on the phone table—the doctor's number."

"I can remember the doctor's number," Marian said, trying not to laugh.

"And if you don't hurry and get into that car," Laura said, raising her voice, "Mrs. Williams will probably come in here and drag you out by the hair."

The car honked again and Mrs. Rivers opened the door, turned back once more and opened her mouth to speak. Marian said: "Mother, for heaven's *sake*," and Laura said, "do hurry," and Mrs. Rivers finally stepped out through the door, saying as she went: "Remember I can get home in half an hour from the time you telephone."

Marian closed the door quickly and leaned against it, laughing. Mrs. Rivers waved back at them once and then went down the path to the waiting car, hesitated, then stepped bravely into the car.

"Poor mother," Laura said. "She'll get there and she'll turn right round and come back."

In all her seventeen years, Laura never imagined that the day would come when she'd be playing chauffeur to a stork.

"Or else ring us up every half-hour," Marian said.

"Perhaps they'll get on the subject of films or cooking or clothes and forget babies for the time being," Laura said.

"They never talk about anything except babies and husbands," Marian said. She went slowly and with deep deliberation into the sitting-room and sat down carefully on the couch. "I'm tired," she said.

"Lucky you didn't say so while mother was still here," Laura said. She threw herself down comfortably into a chair, her legs over the arm, and Marian laughed.

"You're making me jealous," she said. "I can't even *remember* sitting down without stopping to think first."

"It won't be long now," Laura said. She avoided looking at her sister and asked awkwardly: "Shall I get you some tea?"

"I've just had lunch, thank you," Marian said formally, and laughed again.

"A rug?"

"Look, Laura," Marian said, "you've been my sister for seventeen years and I don't think you've brought me a cup of tea in your life, and certainly you've never offered me a rug. And now all of a sudden you decide I'm breakable or something just because you're alone here with me and I'm going to have my baby practically any minute——"

"Any minute?" Laura said nervously and Marian laughed again.

"Anyway," she said, "mother worries enough for all of us. I'm fine I tell you."

"Of course you are," Laura said absently. She had noticed clearly for the first time that Marian's laughter was preoccupied, almost as though any question asked her, any attempt at ordinary communication, was meaningless and faintly amusing. "Why do you laugh every time I ask you anything?" Laura asked.

"I suppose it's because I'm happy."

Laura shook her head hopelessly. Happy, she thought. Once to be as graceful and quick as Marian was and then knowingly commit yourself to inaction, to a condition where even sitting down was difficult and running up the stairs or down the waves into the sea a thing of the past. To be unable to move freely and to be clumsy at everything. . . . Laura shivered and glanced swiftly at Marian, who was lying back on the couch, staring at the ceiling.

"I hope there are enough jackets," Marian said, as though carrying on a reasonable conversation which had begun long ago. "You really can't have too many jackets."

"Do let me get you a cup of tea."

"And in the spring, we can put the pram in the garden and he'll get all the sun," Marian went on. "Or, of course, she will."

LAURA, staring at her own foot, was waiting now for Marian to slip off into the swift light sleep which was so usual for her these days. One minute she might be talking as though to herself and then if one turned to look at her she would be still, breathing delicately, her eyelashes quiet against her cheek. It's as if she were a baby herself, Laura thought, living in a world of pink blankets and soft woollies and warm milk; it's like not being a grown-up at all.

"James," Marian said sleepily. "Elizabeth." Then she was still. Laura waited for a minute, listening to her sister's light breathing and then rolled silently out of the chair and went on tiptoe to the kitchen.

Whistling between her teeth —a habit which had begun to annoy Marian unbelievably during these last few months —she closed the kitchen door, leaving only a crack so that she might hear Marian's call. Then she opened the cake tin and took out a cake which a neighbour had sent over and which Marian had been unable to eat. She cut herself an enormous slice and poured herself a glass of milk. Poor Marian, she thought. She sat down at the table with her cake and milk and took up a magazine Marian had left.

There was a picture of a baby on the cover, round and pink and smiling, and on the pages inside were more babies, on every page—babies opening their mouths for spoonfuls of baby food, babies creeping ridiculously after silly toys and babies splashing in their baths. Marian and her mother pored endlessly over such magazines. Since Marian and Jim had come to stay for the last few weeks before the baby came, it seemed to Laura that she had never seen and heard so much

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about babies in her life. Never seen so many ribbons and soft wool, and never heard so many estimates of the probable habits of James —or Elizabeth. It's *only* a baby, Laura thought, and all this fuss.

Sitting at the kitchen table, she tried holding a baby and laughed at herself. It's not *my* baby she thought, thank heaven.

She had just finished her cake and was just settling down to her glass of milk when the phone rang and she raced down the hall to answer it before Marian awakened. From the corner of the hall where the phone was she could see Marian on the couch and, lifting the receiver, she tightened her lips irritably as she saw Marian stirring softly. "Hallo," Laura said as curtly as possible, so that whoever was calling might know that Marian had been needlessly awakened. "Hallo?"

"It's Sylvia, Laura. How is Marian?"

"Quite well," Laura said formally to her friend.

"She's still at home, then? No family?"

"Not yet," said Laura, watching Marian over the top of the phone. "How are you, Sylvia?" She spoke the name emphatically for Marian's benefit, and Marian turned and shook her head violently. "I'm sorry, she's resting," Laura went on smoothly. "Yes, I'll tell her you rang." As she put the receiver back, she said, aloud, to the phone, "And don't ring again. You hear me?" before she went into the sitting-room to Marian.

"All she wanted was to know how you were feeling," Laura said before she realised that Marian was behaving very oddly indeed. "Is there something wrong?"

"I woke up with cramp," Marian said. She was curled up on the couch, breathing hard, and then suddenly she grinned and looked up at Laura. "I must have got twisted round while I was asleep," she said. "It's gone now. Don't look so scared."

Laura sighed, relieved. "Sylvia wanted to know if you had the baby yet. Seems to me she asks ten times a day."

"I suppose she thinks she's being kind," Marian said. "Or maybe she just wants the news first. Oh goodness!" she added and put her hand quickly to her mouth.

"You have got cramp," Laura said sympathetically. "Want me to rub your back?"

"It's gone," Marian said, frowning.

"Well, let me get you some tea. I've been out in the kitchen eating chocolate cake."

"Was that cake any good? I should ring up Mrs. Jenkins and thank her."

"It was fine," Laura said. "Cramp again?" she asked as Marian doubled over again.

Marian waited for a minute or so, taking deep gasping breaths, and then said: "I wonder if we hadn't better get the doctor."

"What for?" said Laura.

"I just don't feel very well," Marian said vaguely.

Laura half-rose. "Shall I telephone him?"

"Wait a minute," Marian said. "It's coming back. Wait a minute till it's gone."

Laura watched curiously and apprehensively as Marian turned her head against the couch pillows and clenched her fists and when Marian relaxed Laura said: "Listen, Marian, I think we ought to let Dr. Wells know."

"It might go away. It might be something I had for lunch."

IT seemed to Laura that each time, as Marian's cramp left her, she was able to dismiss it as nothing. This isn't like an ordinary stomach-ache, Laura thought, just as Marian turned to her suddenly, shocked, and said: "Laura — do you suppose it *could* be — it isn't expected for another five days."

"Oh *dear*," said Laura helplessly.

Stay calm, she told herself, standing up slowly. In case Marian is *really*—stay calm whatever happens.

"Suppose I just give Dr. Wells a ring," she said elaborately. "We don't want to worry him, of course, but I think we'd better let him know, just in case, you know. I'll just give him a ring. Just in case . . ."

The doctor's number was written in half a dozen places because Mrs. Rivers had copied the number on any relatively permanent spot she could sacrifice. It was recorded indelibly on the wall just beside the table, in tiny letters so as not to mar the paint, and it was in the table phone book and on the message pad, along with the number where Mrs. Rivers could be reached that afternoon, and Jim's office number, which Marian was expected not to be able to remember under any undue strain.

Laura dialled the doctor's number feeling very calm but saying under her breath: "Please answer right away, please answer right away."

"Dr. Wells, please," Laura said as the maid answered, and added "quickly," as she

heard Marian catch her breath again. "Dr. Wells?" she said as soon as he came on the phone. "This is Laura, Laura Rivers——"

"How are you, Laura?" he said genially. "Marian all right?"

"Well, no, she isn't," Laura said. "She's got stomach-ache." She had meant to communicate this more intelligently, with a quick rehearsal of Marian's symptoms, of how the pain started so suddenly, of what they had said and done. But at that moment Marian said, "Oh!" in a sort of little catch of her breath and Laura said nervously: "Dr. Wells, I think you'd better——"

"I wouldn't be at all surprised," the doctor said and laughed. "After all, it isn't as though she wasn't expecting it."

"But she doesn't seem able to get her breath."

"How often does she have the pains?" asked the doctor easily.

"About every two or three minutes and I——"

"You had better go at once, then," said the doctor, suddenly just a little more pressing. "Better get Marian at once to the hospital, and call your mother, Laura. I'd like to have a word with her."

"But mother's not here, Dr. Wells."

"It's going to take Marian a good twenty minutes to reach the hospital," the doctor said. "If your mother's not at home, can you get a taxi?"

"I'd have to get one from the station garage. The village taxi is out for the day I know, and the station taxi would take a quarter of an hour, at least, getting here, and then there would be another twenty minutes to the hospital."

"Is there anyone who could drive Marian to the hospital —Mrs. Williams, perhaps?"

"Mrs. Williams has taken mother," Laura said, panic in her voice. "I don't know—Mrs. Dawlish—no, she's away. No, I don't think there's *anyone*. Oh, dear!"

"Well, don't worry. I'll telephone the hospital and they will send an ambulance. It's all in their day's work." He laughed pleasantly, as though at a familiar joke, and repeated: "Don't worry, Laura," and promptly rang off.

LAURA put down the phone. This is nothing for him, she thought. He's known Marian for years and he's not frightened.

"How is it, dear?" she asked.

"All right now," Marian said. "What did Dr. Wells say?"

"He said you'd better get along to the hospital, just in case. He said he'd get them to send an ambulance."

"An ambulance?" Marian stared. "What a fool I'd look," she said. "Nothing would induce me to go in an ambulance."

"Well, Dr. Wells thought—"

"Suppose it isn't anything at all?" Marian demanded. "It probably *is* indigestion. I'd look an absolute fool! I certainly will *not* go in an ambulance."

"Suppose I drive you?" Laura said, without stopping to think about what she was saying: thinking only that Marian must go right away and they must hurry. "I'm perfectly safe."

"Please don't make me laugh," Marian said. "It hurts when I laugh."

"I can drive you. I've been driving for a month now."

"With mother beside you. You know perfectly well you can't drive alone."

"I wouldn't be alone. You've got a driving licence and I have my 'L' licence. It would be absolutely legal."

"Perhaps!" said Marian doubtfully. "But it would be crazy — mother would never forgive me for letting you."

"Well, if you want an ambulance . . ." Her last words trailed off as Marian screwed up her face and said, "Oogh!" again. Laura could see perspiration on Marian's forehead. She said firmly: "We're going now. If it turns out to be—well, *real*—I can ring up mother and Jim from the hospital. Otherwise they need never know about it."

"Laura!" said Marian, and Laura came over to her quickly. "This is the baby," Marian said. "Perhaps you had better——"

"I know it is," Laura said. "Can you come out to the car now? I'll take care of everything if you'll just get yourself into the car."

Marian nodded and Laura slipped an arm around her to help her off the couch. Quickly she draped Marian's coat over her shoulders, thanking heaven it was still warm enough so that she need not bother to coax Marian's arms into the sleeves. She led her sister out of the front door and hurried to the garage. Let me remember how to start the car without bumping it, she was saying to herself.

As Marian eased herself gently into the front seat

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another pain caught her and Laura hesitated for a minute before realising that it was more important to get moving than to try to help Marian.

After all, she thought, running back into the house, after all, if it *is*, there's nothing I can do to help her except hurry. . . . She threw her own coat over her arm, took up Marian's suitcase and then ripped off the top sheet of the telephone pad where the doctor's number, Jim's office number and the number where Mrs. Rivers could be reached that afternoon were all written.

"Are you all right?" she asked Marian as she slid into the driver's seat.

"I'm fine for the minute," Marian said.

"Leave everything to me." Laura struggled with the ignition key.

"As long as I don't laugh," Marian said.

"Then don't watch me drive," Laura said. "If you're all right now then it doesn't matter how I start it—I mean, if it bumps."

"Well, try not to hit anything," Marian said and laughed. She was lying back against the seat with her eyes closed and Laura, glancing aside as she started the car (smoothly, evenly, professionally), thought, she trusts me, she's so sure that everything's beautiful and wonderful and lovely that she isn't the least bit worried about my driving. She know's it's going to be all right. And Laura knew at the same time that she could make it if Marian could.

"Sure you're all right?" she asked, turning out of the gate into the road.

"I'm fine," Marian said.

Laura put her foot down on the accelerator. She made a wide amateurish sweep of the corner, telling herself that it didn't matter, she would only have to be really careful when they met the traffic on the main road. And it's all perfectly legal, she thought wildly.

"Keep calm," Marian said. "People have had babies before."

"Not me," Laura said. "I mean, not you."

Laura sat back a little. It was almost like driving with her mother, she thought; once you relaxed and stopped worrying about what you were doing. . . .

"Oh, *no*," Marian cried and Laura sat up again, put her foot down hard and thought once you relax it's all right, once you relax it's all right.

"Watch that van," Marian said weakly.

"Passed it as though it were standing still," Laura said madly, after passing the van with a curve that would have whitened her mother's cheek. "People have babies in cars every day."

"Please don't say anything to make me laugh," Marian said.

"Stop for the traffic lights ahead," Laura announced solemnly, and at the same minute, Marian said:

"Excuse me for mentioning it, but hadn't you better put your foot on the brake?"

"I think we might go right through the red light," Laura suggested dubiously. "Surely the police would understand."

"But I think then the police might want to take over," Marian said. "Here it comes again."

SHE subsided with a little moan and Laura raced over the crossroad on the amber light and turned with mad abandon past a coach.

"You certainly do give one a thrill," Marian said weakly but grimly. "It's worth having the baby to take this drive."

"You see that woman on a bicycle?" Laura asked. "Shall I stop and ask her for help?"

"No, I can last out," Marian said laughing, "and I'd rather do it like this than any other way."

"It's a nice day to have a baby," Laura said reasonably.

"I think its astrological sign will be Scorpio," Marian said.

"Gemini," Laura said firmly.

"You're too far over on the right—now it's coming again."

"Gemini," Laura said persistently, not daring to look around at Marian. "I'm sure it's Gemini and you're probably going to have twins. One boy and one girl and I haven't hit anything yet, and just wait till mother hears that you had it without her and what am I going to say to Jim—'Hallo, Jim, congratulations on your twins'?"

"James," Marian said softly. "Elizabeth."

"*If* it's a boy and a girl. If it's two boys will you call one James and the other Jim? And if it's two girls will you call one Eliza and the other——"

"Aunt Laura . . ."

"The driving demon."

"Funny how it goes away again—the pain," Marian said. "That's what makes me think it might be real. Thursday's child is—what, Laura?"

"Monday fair of face, Tuesday full of grace, Wednesday full of woe, Thursday far to go."

"I'm glad it's not Wednesday," Marian said. "Laura," she said, "can you go a bit faster?"

"Thursday's child has far to go," Laura said. She could see the red brick of the hospital ahead and she put her foot down hard on the accelerator.

"Hurry," Marian said. "Laura, please hurry."

Wildly, without realising until the last minute that she was doing it by herself, Laura raced the car around the curve of the hospital driveway to the entrance which was labelled "Emergency."

"Hurry," she said weakly to the nurse who came running towards her. "Thursday's child." Then she said to Marian: "I made it, Marian. I drove you all the way to the hospital without hitting anything."

The hand that rocks the cradle

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"I knew you could," Marian said confidently.

"Laura, I'm glad you were there," Jim said. He had the distracted look of a man who has been called suddenly away from a lingering business lunch, where the conversation has a recreational twist of boxing, into a world of women where a man, even in the guise of father, is not normally expected to intrude. His voice was weak and he patted Laura's shoulder continually as he talked.

"I'm glad you were there," he said absently. "If you hadn't been there, I don't know what we would have done."

"I don't know *why* you didn't telephone me sooner," Mrs. Rivers said. "If you had telephoned me I could have come at once and . . ."

Laura realised now that there was no point in answering. (She saw clearly now

IT is related by a peasant that he had persuaded himself that beyond his fields there were no others, and when he happened to lose a cow and was compelled to go in search of her, he was astonished at the great number of fields beyond his own few acres. This must also be the case of many theorists who have persuaded themselves that beyond this field or little globe of earth there lie no other worlds — simply because they have not seen them.

—Spinoza.

the baby's twenty-first birthday party, with the family gathered around Mrs. Rivers, who was telling them: "And if I hadn't made it just in the nick of time the baby would have been born in a taxi or something . . .") She said, nevertheless: "Mother, Dr. Wells said there wasn't time."

"The only afternoon for *months* that I went out for a minute," Mrs. Rivers said. "If you had only telephoned me at once. I don't know why you didn't telephone me."

"We didn't want to telephone you for nothing."

"I'm glad you were there, Laura," Jim said.

THE waiting room had straight-backed chairs which were uncomfortable to sit on. Jim sat down for a minute on one then moved to another. After a minute there he put out his cigarette and walked across the room to look out of the window. "I wonder what's taking them so *long*," he said.

"You see," Mrs. Rivers said to Laura, "you had plenty of time to telephone me."

"I wonder where Marian is now," Laura said.

Jim turned and stared wildly at Laura. "Where *do* you suppose she is?" he asked.

"Jim," Mrs. Rivers said soothingly, "believe me, I had two fine children, two daughters, and never a minute's trouble. Marian is just like me. We're built the same way. It all starts very quickly."

"I didn't know it was going to take so *long*," Jim said, going over to the door and looking down the hall. "Here's a nurse."

He stood back as the nurse came to the doorway.

"If you had only telephoned——" Mrs. Rivers began and then broke off short when the nurse smiled briskly around at all of them.

"Mr. Bragdon?" she said to Jim.

"Me?" Jim said. "Yes, I mean."

"You have a little boy," the nurse said.

"A what?" Jim said, as though it were a species completely new to him. "A little boy?" He turned to Mrs. Rivers. "You have a little boy."

"James," Laura said, realising to her own horror that her eyes were filling with tears.

"A boy," said Mrs. Rivers softly. "I never would have believed it."

"My wife?" Jim said to the nurse.

"You can see her in an hour," the nurse said, "and her mother and sister can come in a few days. But we only allow the husband on the first day." With a bright but impersonal smile the nurse departed.

"Well," Mrs. Rivers said. "There!"

"A baby," Laura said intelligently.

"There," Mrs. Rivers said. "Would you believe it, the one afternoon I went away for five minutes it had to happen. Well, I suppose it's all for the best but if you had only telephoned me—I didn't want to go but you and Marian . . ." She thought for a minute. "A boy," she said finally. "Isn't that nice?"

Laura was not listening to her mother. She was saying to herself: I helped; I helped do it. A little boy and perhaps they'll let me hold it in a day or two. Aunt Laura . . .

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Those Who Wait

(Continued from page 5)

"No," said Jessie wildly, "that's not what I mean. You can see at a glance that Mildred doesn't care for him that way. She should wait for the right man. She should wait—"

"That's what you did, isn't it?" Mrs. Graham snapped back at her. "You waited for the right man, didn't you? Was it worth it?"

Jessie shrank. Then in a small, clear voice she said, "I never found him. But I wouldn't have had anybody else. And that doesn't mean that another girl who waits won't find him. That's my answer. And now may I say that that was an inexcusable thing for you to say to me?"

Mrs. Graham looked astounded. "Well, if I've hurt your feelings I'm sure I'm very sorry. Horace always said—"

Jessie rose to her feet. "Vera," she said, "I'm sure that Horace was a perfect husband. But unfortunately he makes me sick."

"Jessie! What on earth!"

"I don't care!" Jessie cried.

She put her hand to her head. The other Jessie, mother and father, the Thorntons, Dr. Clark and the Mooney children were all milling around inside it.

"I'm sick and tired of what Horace always said. I don't want to hear it."

With awful majesty, Mrs. Graham gathered her handbag and gloves. "When you have come to your senses, Jessie, you may phone me," she said as she left.

Jessie watched her departure stonily. A little hard core of rebellion began to form inside her.

She put the teacups and plates on the tray and carried them into the kitchen. "Horace always said!" she muttered with an attempt at a snarl that would have broken her elocution teacher's heart. "Horace always said!" She banged the tray down with such force that one of the eggshell-thin cups shattered. She looked at it, shocked. Then she tossed her head. "Silly thing," she told it. "If you can't stand a little bang like that, it serves you right."

THOUGH her fine, daring mood wore off in the days that followed, the little core of rebellion remained and gathered strength. She missed Vera cruelly. A dozen times a day she thought "I must tell Vera," or "I wonder if Vera knows." There was no one to mourn with her the cutting off of little Dianne Watson's braids, or to speculate with her on what kind of people had bought the Armitage house. The nearest she came to weakening was when Alice Frame came home from her trip to another state with her hair dyed flaming red.

It was three whole days before she saw Vera at all. She happened to be in the backyard, pinning some of her mother's doilies to a towel to dry in the sun, when Vera stepped out on to *her* porch and walked with rigid dignity toward her clothesline to remove two dishcloths. Then she gazed blankly over the top of Jessie's head and flounced back into the house.

"She's waiting for me to speak first," Jessie told herself, "and I'll never do it. Never. She had no right to say those things to me. It was unpardonable."

In the long empty days that followed, both of them found a great deal to do in their backyards. Each ignored the other loftily. With hot embarrassment, Jessie realised that the neighbours were watching *them*.

It was over two weeks since Vera had come to tea, but Jessie had lost all sense of time. It must be Saturday afternoon, she thought dully, as she dug fertiliser into her flower bed. And that's Mr. Mooney's voice.

With a jolt she realised that Mr. Mooney's voice was calling her name. "Miss Brantford!" Miss Brantford! Answer me! I know you're there."

Jessie rose and went to the rear fence, trowel still in her gloved hand. "Are you calling me, Mr. Mooney?" she asked stupidly.

"Yes, I'm calling you. You heard me, didn't you? You see that walk? You see it? I spent all afternoon laying that cement, and look at it? Look at it! Your damn cat came over and ran through it!"

"But Mr. Mooney, those aren't all cat tracks."

"So some of them are dog tracks. If you'd keep your damn cat at home, my dog wouldn't chase it."

"I'm terribly sorry, Mr. Mooney. I—"

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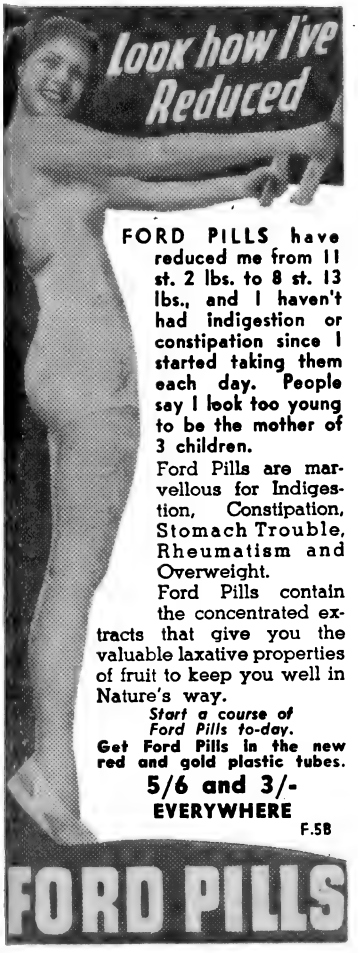

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Mr. Mooney gave a shriek of fury. There they go again! My walk! My walk! If I get my hands on that cat, I'll tear it to pieces."

Jessie looked at him carefully. He was just a red-faced, noisy man. Nothing to be afraid of. "Mr. Mooney," she said, "I must ask you to restrain your language."

"Restrain it! I am restraining it." Mr. Mooney's face glistened with rage and perspiration. "What do you know about language What do you know about anything? An old maid with nothing but a cat."

This was too much. Jessie drew herself up to reply.

It wasn't necessary.

"She could have done much worse, Mr. Mooney." The voice sent chills down Jessie's spine. She turned and saw Mrs. Graham at her back fence, her glasses glinting with the light of battle. "She could have married and produced a brood of monsters, the way you did."

"What?" Mr. Mooney boomed, swinging round and charging like a wounded animal. "What? What business is this of yours?"

Vera lifted her voice even higher. "Oh, I'm interested in a lot of things that aren't my business, Mr. Mooney. I was very interested in the party you had while your wife was away. You know, the one when your guests all sneaked in the back door?"

"My God," said Mr. Mooney hollowly.

"And I was interested in the five empty bottles you put in my garbage bin, Mr. Mooney." .Each time she spoke his name her voice reached brilliant heights of penetration. Mr. Mooney began to glance anxiously over his shoulder. "Were you afraid your wife would see them? Doesn't she know you drink, Mr. Mooney?"

"Please, Mrs. Graham. Please lower your voice a little."

"And why should I? You don't lower yours when you're insulting people. You may go along, Mr. Mooney," she told him, with a lordly wave of her hand, "but we want to hear no further threats against Miss Brantford's cat."

MR. MOONEY slunk off, and Mrs. Graham turned to Jessie. "May I come over a minute? There's something I want to say to you."

"Of course. Certainly. Of course," said Jessie weakly.

"I've had a lot of time to think, the last few days," Mrs. Graham said, when they were settled in Jessie's shaded living-room. "And I want to tell you that you were right. Mildred should wait."

"Why, Vera . . ."

"Just a moment. I haven't finished. I said that if she waits, she'll maybe finish up like you. It was thoughtless and unkind, and I'm sorry. What I didn't say was that if she doesn't wait, she'll probably turn out like me."

"Vera!" said Jessie faintly.

"Just being married doesn't make a woman superior. I've always known that. I just wouldn't admit it. Especially being married to somebody like Horace. Horace," said Vera Graham distinctly, "was a tiresome old goat."

Jessie sat stunned. Slowly she realised the tremendous sacrifice Vera had just made. She reached over timidly and took her friend's hand.

They sat in silence. Jessie withdrew a lace handkerchief from her bosom and wiped her eyes. Vera sniffed, significantly.

After a long pause, Jessie smiled in a watery way. "I've been thinking too, Vera, and I've decided that we've wasted enough of our lives watching and wondering about other people's sins. I think—I think it's time we had some of our own."

"Whatever do you mean?" The glitter in Vera's eyes made her look more like her old self.

"Well, to start with, I found a bottle of father's wine in the basement. It's thirty years old, so it's probably quite harmless. I'm going to get it right now and pour us each a—a slug."

"Horace always said—" Vera stopped abruptly on an indrawn breath. The two ladies regarded each other for a long moment, and then, slowly, an identical, unholy grin spread over each face. "To heck with Horace. I'd love some. And Jessie—"

"Yes, Vera?"

Mrs. Graham straightened her glasses with a brisk flourish. "We might plan a little outing together for next week. The races are on. I read about it in the paper."

"Races?"

"Horse races. I've always wanted to go, but Horace always felt—"

They laughed until they were helpless. ●

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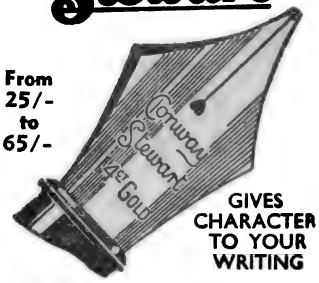

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All Creatures Great and Small

(Continued from page 3)

Old Hans pretended not to hear. "What's your name?" he asked.

Silence.

"Oh, well, it matters not," said the old man calmly. "I shall call you Tich."

"Tich." The boy was intrigued despite his determination not to be won over. "You talk funny," he said. "Where'd you come from?"

"Never mind where I come from. I live here now and look after the garden for Sir George."

"Who's he?"

"All this place belongs to him. You are staying in his house."

"You mean the beak that brought me away from court?"

"Yes, the beak." The old man grinned, a warm and friendly grin, and fancied he saw the faintest answering gleam on his captive's face.

There was silence again while old Hans busied himself arranging wet pyjamas before the fire. When he had finished, he said: "Well, I was just going to have my supper when I heard you. Are you hungry?"

The boy sniffed. He'd been bribed with food before.

In the corner of the little room stood a small gas cooker, all spotless white enamel and gleaming taps. Old Hans took a frying pan, some bacon, potatoes and onions and slowly and carefully began to dice and then fry them.

Delicious, tempting smells began to come from the pan. Derek could not ignore them, but he was not yet ready to lower his flag.

"Ain't you got a woman to do that? Cooking's for women."

"My missus died a year ago, so I must cook or go without. What would you do?"

The boy nodded. The argument seemed perfectly reasonable. He began to approve of his host and the smell grew more and more irresistible. He surrendered. He demolished a sizable helping together with several hunks of bread, drank some scalding coffee and then said graciously, in response to old Hans' inquiry: "It was all right."

From the corner of the dresser came a soft and sleepy twittering. The child stopped abruptly, staring at a cage, shrouded in a dark cloth.

"What's that?"

"That is Joey. We have woken him up." He removed the cloth and there, blinking sleepily from the bottom of the cage, was a blue budgerigar.

The boy slid down from his chair and clutching his blanket, crossed to the dresser.

"Why don't he sit on his perch?" he asked.

"He does sometimes, but he gets tired. You see, he has only one foot." Old Hans opened the cage door and pushed in a large hand with the forefinger extended. Unhesitatingly but rather clumsily, helping himself with his wings, Joey flopped on to the finger, gripping it with his one foot. "Good night, Joey. Joey go to bed," he remarked, and then continued his drowsy little song, snuggling down against the warmth of the old man's hand.

FOR a moment the boy gazed at the bird, smiling the absorbed and happy smile of interested childhood. "Somebody hurt him," he said. "Who done it?"

"Nobody hurt him. He had an accident and I nursed him better. He manages all right now. He's a clever fellow. He can sing 'God Save the King' and I'm teaching him 'Silent Night.' I reckon he'll just about know it for Christmas Day." He put the bird carefully back in the cage and covered it with the cloth.

Then he picked up the boy and carried him back to the fire. "The bird is up too late, and so are you. Come, I will tell you a story about another bird of mine, a robin." He settled the boy comfortably on his lap. "Shut your eyes," he commanded.

"Why?"

"So you can listen better. Now listen carefully. . . . But there was no need to continue. Derek's head nodded to the old man's shoulder and he was asleep.

Old Hans was up by six as usual, but this morning he had set his alarm so as to make quite sure. The boy must not wake and find himself alone and be frightened. He had made up the fire and was filling the kettle when the mound of eiderdown on the sofa stirred and he caught the fixed gaze of a pair of bright eyes.

"Hallo, Tich!" he said cheerfully. "How are we this morning?"

"O.K." was the brief reply. Then, as his eyes fell on a neatly folded pile of clothes

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on a chair: "Them's my clothes."

"That's right. I fetched them for you. Had to go over last night and tell them you were safe. Reckon they were in quite a state when they found you missing."

The boy ignored this. "How's he this morning? Joey, I mean."

"Joey's fine. He'll be having his bath in a minute same as you."

The old man produced an old-fashioned tin bath and Derek found himself in it before he had time to think of a suitable protest. He was so absorbed watching the bird splashing happily in his little pie dish that he allowed himself to be soaped and scrubbed and towelled without a word. Once again the old man shuddered at the bruises and weals, and red anger seethed within him.

"When we have had breakfast there is something else I will show you," he remarked.

DEREK ate hungrily, scraping his plate round and round with a crust of bread and stuffing the crust in his mouth. He drank three cups of coffee and then went over to Joey's cage.

"Would he come out for me?"

"Try him."

The boy opened the cage door. "Careful!" warned old Hans. "Don't scare him—you are strange, you know."

The boy put his hand in the cage, extending the forefinger as he had seen the old man do. Joey did not move, but neither did he shrink away. He considered the newcomer in silence.

"Come on, Joey!" urged the boy, and began making soft whistling noises between his teeth. Cautiously, Joey approached the finger, then retreated to his corner, twittering gently.

"There you are, he talks to you, but he is not sure of you yet. He must be careful, you see. How does he know you will not hurt him? You're so much bigger than he is."

The boy's face clouded with disappointment and he withdrew his hand. He walked over to the fireplace and began aiming kicks at a piece of dead coal fallen on the hearth.

"You're bigger'n me," he observed, a trifle sulkily, "but I ain't scared of you. I don't reckon you'd hurt me."

"Nobody gets hurt in this house if I can help it," said the old man, "but he's only a bird. He's got no sense, only instinct. You're a boy and you've got sense."

Derek stared at him. "What's instink?"—and then, without waiting for a reply: "You think I got sense?"

"Sure I do!" said old Hans, artfully. "I bet you're a clever kid when you like. Never mind about Joey. Let him get used to you bit by bit. We'll try again this afternoon. Now, you come with me."

He led the way to the back door and opened it. The little garden was upholstered in fat, billowing cushions of snow. The bushes looked like tea cosies and the boughs of the young fruit trees were weighed down till they merged with the heavy drifts on the ground below. The air sparkled and the sun shone.

Derek sniffed ecstatically. "Cor!" he yelled and flung himself out of the door headlong into the nearest drift. One of the trees, jostled by his flailing arms, discharged its entire load on his head. "I'm a snowman!" he shrieked. "Look! I'm an Arctic explorer. I'm Captain Scott!"

Old Hans picked him up bodily and dusted him down. "You're set on getting pneumonia, I can see. You can play snowmen when you're dressed for it. Do you reckon Captain Scott went exploring in little short pants, no hat and no coat? Come on now, we're going visiting. I've got some more patients to show you. Anyway, I cannot have you catching cold before Christmas Day. There is a party to go to, and we are going to it."

He led the way to a potting shed beside the cottage and, propelling the boy in front of him, he entered it and shut the door. In addition to the usual contents of potting sheds there was a heavy wooden bench against one wall and on it several wooden boxes with fronts of fine wire netting. In one sat a wild rabbit. One foreleg was in splints and tightly bandaged, but he fell to nibbling the cabbage leaves the old man pushed through the bars.

"I found him in a snare over in the wood," explained old Hans. "He is doing fine. In another week we shall be able to let him free if the snow has gone."

IN the next box there was nothing to see except an oblong cardboard carton open at both ends. A few wisps of cotton-wool protruded.

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Old Hans began to make soft, chirruping noises and the carton began to rock slightly. First a beak, followed by a pair of bright, black eyes, followed by a tiny brown head began to emerge, and finally a somewhat bedraggled robin, rather unsteady on his legs but very much alive, plopped out on the cage floor.

Hans picked him up gently. "Now watch him," he said, "watch him take his little drop of tiddly."

"What is it?" asked the boy. His eyes were round and wide, washed clear of fear and sullenness, the fascinated eyes of a child.

"It is brandy and water," replied the old man, who was administering the liquid by pressing a tiny salt spoon against the bird's beak and tilting it smartly when the beak opened. Much of the mixture was spilled and the robin sneezed violently several times, but some of it went in.

"Watch him!" said Hans. "He is better already."

The robin shuffled along the cage bottom to peck some of the food laid down for him. Then he briskly wiped his beak on a piece of wood.

"Always a good sign when they do that," said Hans. "It shows they are getting better. Like a woman powdering her nose."

"What's wrong with him?"

"Well, I can only guess at that," answered the old man. "I found him lying under a tree pretty near gone. His wing was hurt in some way and he couldn't fly. I think he was near dead from starvation. But he is clever, that one—almost as clever as Joey. Just you watch him. He knows he must keep himself warm."

He laid the carton with one end immediately facing the bird's beak and at once it began to wriggle its way in. In a second or two nothing could be seen but the tips of the long tail feathers and the carton was quite still.

Derek looked up, plainly awed by this performance. "Cor!" he breathed.

The other cages were empty. "We are not overcrowded just now," said old Hans. "Sometimes we have four or five patients at once. You'd be surprised at the accidents that happen. Remind me to tell you sometime about the sparrow that nearly hanged itself."

As they walked back to the cottage, Derek did not appear to notice the snowdrifts. He occupied himself trying to tread in the same prints he had made on the outward journey and occasionally peered up at the old man's face.

After a while he said: "Will he get well?"

"Of course—all he needs is rest and warmth. When this snow has gone he'll be ready to fly away."

"I hope the snow stays for ever," Derek said. "I don't want him to go."

"He'll come back to see me now and then. Robins always do. They're friendly birds and like to be near people. Now, how about some coffee?" He looked at his watch. "It is before time, but on a cold day like this I think we can be good to ourselves."

When the coffee was drunk and the cups washed, the boy, who had wiped them very carefully and hung them on the dresser, fetched his overcoat and cap.

"Shan't be long," he announced.

"Get your scarf," ordered old Hans. "Give it here," and he wrapped it round Derek according to his own ideas.

"Got to see them up there." The boy jerked his thumb in the direction of the big house. "I got to fix something."

"There's sausages and pancakes for lunch," said the old man. "In about an hour."

"Don't you want to know what I'm doing?"

"That is your business," said the old man. "You can tell me if you want when you come back."

HE watched the little figure running across the snow. It was making for the big house, and not for the kitchen quarters either. The boy was going to the main entrance. That meant he was in search of Sir George—or maybe the lady of the house. Nothing to worry about. He had had a talk with them last night and knew their kindliness and warmth of heart. They only wanted to do what was best for the boy.

"After Christmas, he's going to St. Anthony's," Sir George had told him. "It is a well-run place. I'm one of the governors and I often go to see the boys. It's a real pleasure to be among lads who are happy and well cared for."

"He is such a little one . . ." said Hans, and stopped.

It was Adelaide who sensed what was in his mind. "Don't you approve?" she asked.

"Well, I am thinking he might get across some of the older boys. He has had to stick up for himself, one can

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see that, and it's made him a bit cocky."

"Sir George thinks he needs the comradeship of other boys, Hans."

"Maybe," said Hans, but was obviously not in agreement. Now, remembering the look on the child's face as he tried to make friends with Joey, he made up his mind. He must have another talk with his employer. Joey and the sick robin were going to do him far more good than the boys at St. Anthony's.

Derek's visit to the house was brief. He found Adelaide in the morning-room, writing letters. She looked up as he entered and could not help smiling at what she saw. Hans certainly meant to keep the boy warm! A long woollen scarf was wound twice round his throat; once over the top of his head and the ends, which were taken back under the armpits, were secured in the small of his back with a large safety pin. A round school cap perched on top of this confection.

"Hallo, Derek!" she said.

The boy's face wore a new expression. It was clear that he had something on his mind. But for the absurdity of the idea, she would have said that he looked like a business man who has to hurry back to the office to attend to important matters.

HE went straight to the point, without replying to her greeting. "I've come to tell you I ain't coming back," he announced. "I've got to help the old man."

"Oh, Derek. I'm arranging a tea party for you on Christmas Day, and Hans is coming, too. You mustn't let me down!"

"Can't promise," he replied, briefly.

"But what is it that is going to keep you both so busy?"

"Well, Joey don't know his piece yet, and there's a sick robin, and we got to clear away the snow and . . ." He broke off and jumped up. "Well, I'm off!" As he reached the door, he turned back and grinned at her. "Tell you what, if Joey knows his piece, we'll come. So long!" And he was gone.

Adelaide's heart stirred. Why do all small boys have far too many teeth, jostling and pushing each other out of the way? This was a different child from the defiant fugitive of yesterday's breakfast incident. As she turned back to her letters, her eyes fell on the used Christmas card and her own note: "Remind George—gardener—Christmas Day." Carefully, she crossed it out.

Christmas Day brought no sign of thaw. There had been a further heavy fall of snow in the morning, obliterating all the footprints and wheel marks in the driveway, and Adelaide, standing at the big window, looked out on a crisp, white world. A noisy bunch of sparrows was quarrelling over the crumbs she had thrown on the terrace. The white mist that often accompanies hard frost was beginning to float round the bushes. It was four o'clock and she was expecting guests.

"I've never known Hans to be a minute late in all the years . . ." George broke off to blow through his pipe, and two figures appeared in the mist at the end of the drive. One was very tall and heavily built and the other was very small. The small figure had to skip and run a little to keep up and it kept darting away to jump in the drifts which bordered the path. After a while both figures halted and a small bundle which the larger one had been carrying was very carefully transferred to the hands of his companion. After this manoeuvre, both figures came on again, walking soberly side by side.

"I wonder if this is the answer, George," cried Adelaide as eagerly as a girl. "Look how well they seem to get on! Why, even from here you can see they are friends!"

"He seems to be bringing something," said George, "something alive, I should think. He's being very careful about it. I wonder what it can be!"

"Oh, George, dear, this is how I've always wanted Christmas!" Her voice was unsteady.

Her husband came to her side and slipped his hand under her elbow. "Tears!" he said kindly. "Come, my dear!"

"I know, George! I know I'm a sentimental old woman!"

Side by side they waited for their guests. Behind them, in the dark recesses of the big room, a spangled Christmas tree winked and glittered in the firelight. A variety of gaily coloured cakes and jellies and everything that should be on a tea table at Christmas time covered the white tablecloth so that hardly an inch of it was visible, and, as the front door bell rang, Adelaide left the window and went round the room and switched on all the lights. ●

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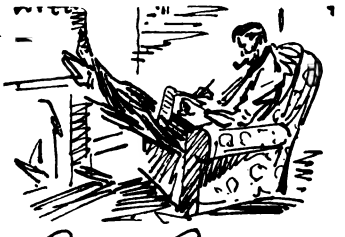

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Lion and Unicorn

(Continued from page 11)

coat of arms during his brief reign. His half-sister, Queen Mary, made no change except to replace half the English shield with the arms of her husband, Philip II of Spain. The first Elizabeth returned to the style of her father, Henry VIII. On her death in 1603 the dragon of Wales was replaced by Scotland's fabulous beast, the unicorn—symbol of strength of mind and body, of pride which knows no subjection. A most regal beast—even if it never existed—and worthy to mark the union of England and Scotland under James I; although some of us of Scottish descent would prefer our unicorn free, not collared and chained!

Lions in the Tower.

FASCINATING as the story of these symbolic beasts may be, they are by no means the only animals connected with royalty. For centuries wild beasts were kept in the Tower of London as a sort of Royal Zoo. This private Zoo was a certain guide to watermen in London's fogs; as they rowed up the Thames they located their position by hearing, and winding, the king's beasts! Until early in the nineteenth century some animals were imprisoned there; later they were transferred to Regent's Park to form the nucleus of that Zoo. The only remnants of the Tower Zoo are the ravens, descendants, no doubt, of the fatal birds which croaked Anne Boleyn to the scaffold.

Among the earliest Royal animal collectors was Henry I. He went in for big game—lions and leopards. Although such animals were of course much more difficult to bring back alive then than now, the menagerie was augmented from time to time by diplomatic gifts from European royalties. Henry III secured three more leopards in this way, but the burgesses of London were much displeased at their arrival, as they had to find the money to maintain them. When in 1252 a white bear arrived from Norway the sheriffs of London were particularly aggrieved as the bear's keep was costly. This included "*fourpence daily for food, a muzzle and iron chain to keep him out of the water, and a stout cord to hold him when a-fishing in the Thames.*" More polar bears followed, and boatmen had to be enlisted (and paid probably the contemporary equivalent of danger money for the job) to control the bears' activities when they were let out into the river on collars and chains after the salmon which then abounded in the Thames.

An Expensive Pet.

BUT worse was to come. In 1254 an elephant arrived from France. This was a sensation for Londoners, as there had not been an elephant in England for over a thousand years, since the Romans had imported one or two as unpaid labour to haul stone for roads and bridges. After landing at Sandwich Henry's beast, amid the amazement and delight of the people, made a majestic, almost triumphal progress to Greenwich. It is sad to learn that the reception committee met this rare visitor with glum faces. But then the sheriffs had to provide for him "a strong and suitable house," and maintain him and his keeper.

The Thames was indeed a Royal river, for all salmon caught there belonged to the king. All marked swans were his, too: in fact, a salaried officer bore the title, Keeper of Swans. This bird is often represented on shields with a crown on his head, denoting his position as "king of waterfowl."

Unlike our black swan, this eminence did not protect swans from slaughter. In the markets of Edward III they were sold for five shillings each; nearly a thousand years later they were sold during meat rationing for as much as three pounds each. Regarding Royal fishing rights, as recently as 1953 the Queen exercised her right as owner of all sturgeon caught in British waters, by accepting a "royal" sturgeon netted off the east coast of England.

Birds—apart from trained hawks and owls—do not figure much as Royal pets, but the wit and resource of Henry VIII's parrot should not be forgotten. This bird—it probably came from Africa—lived for many years with its master at Westminster. It had the freedom of the palace and a great partiality for nipping the bare ankles of servants who could not afford woollen hose. On one occasion, when watching the Thames traffic from a casement window, it leaned too far out and fell into the stream. But before the waters closed over his head, with great presence of mind it cried out, "A boat, a boat, for twenty pounds!" ●

"That's four and ten altogether."

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The Ordeal of Humbleby

(Concluded from page 21)

HUMBLEBY sucked complacently at his cheroot. "That," then, was the story Jourdain told me while we waited for Garstin-Walsh to appear. A clear case of self-defence, and a very good riddance, and the only reason Jourdain was there was to have a look at the study where the thing had happened, for the purpose of making the usual routine report.

"He'd just finished his tale when Garstin-Walsh came downstairs. Garstin-Walsh has always been a stringy, bony sort of man, and even when I first knew him he looked old; so the years have really altered him very little, in comparison with the rest of us. At the moment he was a bit haggard and white, and I guessed he hadn't slept much; I got the impression, too, that all the time he was talking to us he was preoccupied, inwardly, with some sort of intellectual balancing trick: I mean that he had the precarious, *constricted* air you notice in people who are trying to think of two things at once. But he was very civil with us, brushing aside my suggestion that I should go away and come back at some more convenient time; and he took Jourdain and myself into the study as soon as the nurse, who'd been packing and tidying, quitted it.

"It was a pleasant room, its pleasantness a bit marred, at the moment, by surgical smells and paint smells (the painters hadn't finished with it till supper-time the previous day); and while Jourdain explained that he'd come to look at the shot holes and so forth — rather needlessly, since he'd already said all that to the housekeeper, and she, presumably, had conveyed it to Garstin-Walsh—I had a look round.

"There was more shabbiness than I should have expected: Garstin-Walsh had —has—an unusually spick-and-span sort of mind, and there are considerable private means for him to spend as well as his pension, so that the threadbare carpet and the dented brass coal scuttle surprised me at first. But of course, there was, in view of Brebner's insinuations and independent income, one very plausible explanation of the shabbiness. And it'll show you how superficial my friendship with Garstin-Walsh was when I say that the possibility of blackmail neither shocked nor astonished me particularly, and that I wasn't conscious of there being any disloyalty involved in my having my suspicions about Garstin-Walsh's professional past.

"So there we all were: Garstin-Walsh fidgeting in a monkish kind of dressing gown which he wore over his shirt and plus-fours instead of a coat, Jourdain gabbling away as only a County D.I. can gabble, and myself thinking disinterested thoughts about consignments of service dress which had gone astray, and never been recovered, during the first months of 1917. It's no use my pretending I was comfortable. I wasn't.

"On the other hand, my uneasiness had nothing whatever to do with blackmail or its pretexts, or with the problem of what, in this particular instance, I ought to do about them—since I intended, very firmly indeed, to do nothing about them whatever. No, it was more the sort of sensation you have when in crossing a road you hear a car coming at you and can't for the moment either see it or judge, from the sound of it, what direction it's coming from. I remember I was actually humming quietly, to keep my spirits up, as I strolled over to the french windows to have a look at the view.

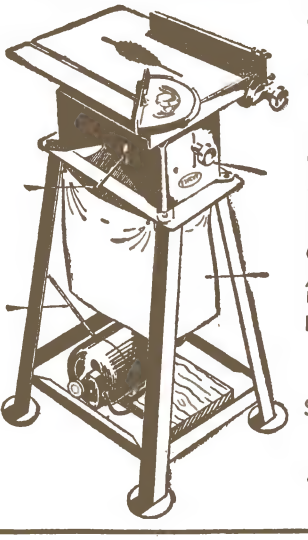
"And that was when it happened.

"The village constable hadn't confiscated Garstin-Walsh's revolver — there was no reason, after all, why he should—and apparently Garstin-Walsh had taken it to bed with him. Anyway, he had it on him now, in a pocket of his dressing gown, and I was just on the point of making some remark about the garden when he suddenly whipped the thing out, shouting incoherently, and fired it at me.

"I was simply flabbergasted, of course. I stood there helplessly trying to remember the details of Gross' suicidal method of disarming people with guns, and Jourdain stood there goggling, and one shot smashed a vase on a table beside me, and another smashed a pane of the french windows, and a third went heaven knows where, and then, when I thought my last hour had certainly come, Garstin-Walsh waved me away—still shouting, still incoherent—and backed out of the french windows and fled.

"Almost immediately Jourdain went after him—and to

EZYCUT and GILBRO



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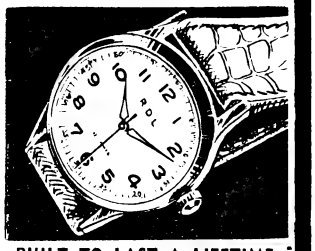

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cut a long story short, caught up with him at the bottom of the garden, where he'd stopped and was standing like a man in a trance, staring at the revolver in his hand as if he couldn't imagine what it was or how he'd come by it. He surrendered it, and returned to the house with Jourdain, like a lamb; and he was more dazed and bewildered than I've ever seen anyone in my life. He knew what he'd done, all right, but he couldn't account for his motives in doing it. 'It — it was like last night,' he stammered. 'When I saw you standing by those windows I remembered Brebner, and the gun was in my pocket and——'

"Well, it wasn't attempted murder, because plainly there was no malice; and there's no such thing as attempted manslaughter. So we telephoned his doctor and got him to bed, still quite bemused—and in bed, for all I know, he is still. The doctor, of course, understood all about it: it was delayed shock, or post-traumatic automatism or some such thing, and the only surprising feature of the business was that I was still alive. I can tell you, I felt quite ashamed of myself for upsetting what otherwise would have been a perfect sample-phenomenon for the medical text books. . . . Well, I went away, and to-day, as you know, travelled up here to Oxford, and——"

"Why?" Fen interrupted. "Why did you come to Oxford? To see me?"

"Well, yes."

"You're not satisfied, then?"

"I'm not," said Humbleby. "Everything about the affair fits, and seems quite innocent, excepting just one obstinate little fragment."

"And that is?"

"He unloaded the gun, you see. After he'd shot at me, and before Jourdain grabbed him, he unloaded the gun and threw the spent cartridge cases away somewhere. When he handed the gun to Jourdain its chambers were empty. And why the devil, I ask myself, should he have done *that*?"

OUTSIDE the windows of the first-floor room in which they sat, a clock struck six. Dusk was falling; the gleam had gone from the gilt titles of the books ranged along the walls, and from the college dining-hall you could hear the clink and rattle of plates being laid for dinner. In the broad, high room, with its painted panels, its luxurious chairs, its huge flat-topped desk and its weird medley of pictures, Detective-Inspector Humbleby gestured expressively and fell silent—and for the time being Fen seemed disposed to let the silence stay.

His ruddy, clean-shaven face was pensive; his long, lean body sprawled gracelessly, heels on the fender; his brown hair, ineffectually plastered down with water, stood up, as usual, in mutinous spikes at the crown of his head. For perhaps two minutes he remained staring, mute and motionless, into the amber depths of his glass . . .

And then, suddenly, he chuckled.

"Rather nice, yes," he said. "Tell me, were the spent cartridges ever found?"

> THAT is the best solitude that comes closest in the human form—your friend, your other self, who leaves you alone, yet cheers you: who peoples your house or your field and wood with tender remembrances: who stands between your yearning heart and the great outward void that you try in vain to warm and fill; who in his own person and spirit clothes for you, and endows with tangible form, all attractions and subtle relations and meanings that draw you to the woods and fields. What the brooks and the trees and the birds said so faintly and vaguely, he speaks with warmth and directness. Indeed, your friend complements and completes your solitude and you experience its charm without desolation.
>
> —*John Burroughs.*

"No. At the time, of course, we didn't bother about them. But Jourdain was hunting for them yesterday, and he couldn't find them anywhere."

Fen's amusement grew. "Nor will he ever, I imagine—unless your Colonel Garstin-Walsh is a hopeless blunderer."

"But how are they important? I don't see——"

"Don't you?" Fen lit a cigarette and reached for an ashtray. "I should imagine, myself, that they're important for the reason that one of them is a blank."

"A blank?" Humbleby's face was very much that.

And Fen roused himself, speaking more energetically. "You'll agree that Garstin-Walsh obviously *possessed* blanks; no man in his senses starts races at the village sports with live ammunition."

"Yes, I agree about that."

"And two of the shots he fired at you smashed things, so they were real enough. But what happened to the third?"

HUMBLEBY was anything but stupid; after a moment's reflection he nodded abruptly. "If that third shot was a blank," he said, "then that would mean. . . . No, wait. I see what you're getting at, but I can't quite work it out for the moment. So go on."

"We're assuming, remember, that Garstin-Walsh got rid of those cartridge cases advisedly—that he wasn't, in fact, the maniac he seemed. Now, it's possible to conceive quite a number of solid reasons for his acting as he did; but so far as my deductions have gone, there's only one of them that covers all the facts. A blank cartridge is recognisably different from a live one. Let's take it, then, that the spent shells were thrown away in order to conceal the presence of a blank among them, in case either you or Jourdain should be curious enough to investigate the gun. What follows? Quite simply, the fact that Garstin-Walsh fired two live shots and a blank at you. And if he did that, it can only have been because Jourdain was just about to examine the study, and there was a bullet-hole in the wall which had to be accounted for somehow.

"Now, there was *no* bullet-hole in the wall prior to the Brebner shooting; if there had been, the painters would have found it and repaired it. So what would have happened if Garstin-Walsh hadn't staged his shooting act with you? Jourdain, finding a bullet-hole in the wall, would have reasoned thus:

"'This hole must be the result of the single shot Garstin-Walsh fired at Brebner last night.

"'It can't have been made subsequently, because Brebner and the nurse were in here all night.

"'Therefore when Garstin-Walsh fired at Brebner he missed.

"'But there is a bullet from Garstin-Walsh's revolver lodged in Brebner's skull.

"'Therefore Garstin-Walsh must have shot Brebner earlier on, before he returned here and met Weems.

"'And that doesn't look much like self-defence; it looks like murder.'

"That Brebner was blackmailing Garstin-Walsh is ob-

vious enough. It's obvious, too, that Garstin-Walsh decided he must put a stop to it. So as I see it, he must have shot Brebner after Brebner left *The Three Crowns*, have gone to the cottage to remove whatever evidence of misappropriation of Army supplies Brebner was using, and have then returned to his house. He'd shot Brebner in the skull, and so naturally assumed that he was dead, but——"

"Yes, that's the difficulty," Humbleby interposed. "The idea of a man with a bullet in his brain rushing about with a shot gun intent on vengeance——"

"Oh come, Humbleby." Fen was mildly shocked. "It's not common, I grant you, but there are plenty of cases on record. John Wilkes Booth, who assassinated Lincoln, is one. Gross and Taylor and Sydney Smith quote others. Brain injuries don't kill at once, and in a certain proportion of cases they don't kill at all. They don't necessarily involve loss of consciousness or inability to act, either: there was that fourteen-year-old boy, you remember, who tripped and fell on an iron rod he was carrying; the rod went clean through his brain; but all that happened was that he pulled it out and went on home, and he didn't die until more than a week later, after an interlude during which he hadn't even felt particularly ill. . . .

"But Garstin-Walsh must have had a nasty turn when the man he'd left for dead burst in at his french windows. No wonder he was 'fairly thoroughly unnerved.' No wonder his shot went wild. But no wonder, also, that Brebner could hardly hold the shot gun with which he intended to revenge himself; no wonder he collapsed just after Garstin-Walsh fired at him. . . .

"Garstin-Walsh must have rejoiced. He'd murdered a man, and now, by the queerest combination of accidents, the thing had been made to seem a perfect case of self-defence. The only snag lay in that superfluous, that tell-tale bullet-hole in the study wall. In the excitement following Brebner's collapse it wouldn't be noticed—the more so if a piece of furniture were unobtrusively shifted so as to conceal it. But there was no chance during the night of removing the bullet and plugging the hole; and there was very little chance that Jourdain would miss it when he examined the study next morning.

"So Garstin-Walsh, having heard from his housekeeper of Jourdain's presence and intentions, and seeing no opportunity, with such a crowd of people in the house, of slipping into the study and dealing with the hole before meeting Jourdain, loaded his revolver with two live cartridges and a blank; and then —you having placed yourself conveniently in position near the french windows and the bullet-hole — staged his nervous breakdown."

There was a long silence. Then Humbleby said: "Yes, I'm sure you're right. But it's all conjecture, of course."

"Oh, quite," said Fen cheerfully. "If my theory's false, there won't be any proof of it. And if it's true, there won't be any proof of it, either. So you can take your choice. The only possibility of checking it would be if the——"

He was interrupted by the shrilling of the telephone. "That might be for me," Humbleby told him. "I took the liberty of asking Jourdain to get in touch with me here if there was any news, so. . . ."

And in fact the call was for him. He listened long and spoke little. And presently, ringing off, he said:

"Yes, it was Jourdain. He's found those cartridge cases."

"In a place where he'd looked previously?"

"No. And none of them is a blank. Which means——"

"Which means," said Fen as he picked up the whisky decanter and refilled their glasses, "that on this side of eternity there's at least one thing we shall *never* know."

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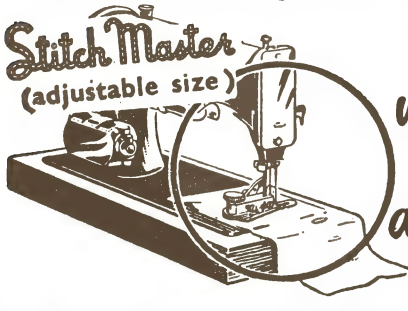

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Animals Who Wear Mink Coats

(Continued from page 7)

got encouragement from other beginners.

With a field vacant at the bottom of his garden, Mr. Hicks and his daughter, together with one of his employees, Fred Yarwood ("He, at least," says Mr. Hicks, "knew something about breeding dogs and rabbits"), set out to design their own cages. This was most important, for cleanliness, ease of service for the staff, and freedom of movement for the little furry guests are essential.

The average cage, built high off the ground, is about 6 ft. long and 18 ins. wide, made of strong wire mesh. At one end is a wooden box in two compartments, one for entry and one for nesting, covered with an asbestos sheet to keep off the sun—which the mink does not like. Under the cage runs a board to catch the waste. Into the wire mesh is set a cup-shaped receptacle for food and a drinking bowl.

The farm — males at one end, females at the other—is surrounded by a high mesh fence, but this did not prevent the two escapees from answering the call of the wild. One did so when the wind upset his cage and blew the top off; the other fought his way to freedom by gnawing through an inch-thick wooden board. Both were off like streaks of lightning — minks are known for their extraordinary speed and agility. "Only a fox or the strange surroundings could have had the better of those two," says Mr. Hicks, "but I like to think they are hereabouts somewhere, looking at us from the outside."

With an unusually large stock of 30 mated females to start from (each is worth from £25 to £50, according to the strain) the Hicks family were in the mink business and they knew it very soon. The little furry things had to be observed, docketed, fed, watered, and carefully watched.

They soon found out that no one can make friends with a mink — not even another mink. Only one is known to have been tamed in Britain and it wears a dog collar to prove it. With their delicate pug noses, their little ferrety and slithering ways and glistening fur, they invite stroking, but it is not worth the risk. They have strong, pointed teeth with interlocking jaws, and a finger is no trouble to them. A piece of glove or a tatter of cloth will remain in these jaws until they are prised open. Consequently, mink experts rarely handle them, but when they have to they wear heavy leather gloves.

Love a Fight

THEY have to be kept strictly on their own, for they love a fight with their kith and kin. Once, during the first months, Manager Yarwood turned his back for five seconds on two females in the same cage and when he looked again each had clawed the other to the backbone. Resilient and tough, they survived to grow another coat.

At the mating season the male will purr when the female is put into his cage; some females, however, will set upon the male with such vigour that he will cower into a corner. "You have to watch this," says Mr. Hicks, "because it will give the male such a strong inferiority complex that he might never work again." Even left on its own, a mink will pick a fight with itself. Quick as a flash, it will run after its tail and bite it raw, but this, according to experts like Yarwood, denotes an unbalanced diet, a lack of vitamins.

Minks make very good mothers. They are devoted and selfless; they will starve themselves to feed their youngsters (kitts as they are called) if necessary. Disturbed in the early stages of rearing either by noise or the elements they will, however, eat their young rather than let them suffer. This happened once at Totteridge when a plane swooped low over the farm. Inside a few minutes, two females had devoured their entire litters.

The new mink ranchers had to learn about feeding habits, too. In its normal surrounding mink feeds partly on predigested food which it finds in the stomachs of the animals it kills. So now at Totteridge, the diet is 65 per cent. fish waste (the 200 animals eat three hundredweight of it a week at a penny a pound), five per cent. meat, ten per cent. liver, the rest being made up with blood, cereal, vegetables, yeast, cod-liver oil, etc.

Of this, the female, much the smaller of the two, will eat six or seven ounces a day and the male about half a pound. At Totteridge, the

food is kept in a refrigerator, mixed by machines and ladled out to each animal. Incidentally, salt is poison to mink.

They are remarkably free of disease. In American ranches, often huddled close together in tight cages, they might catch distemper, but here, in large, well-spaced homes, they seem to enjoy the British climate. They might get blood poisoning or boils on their heads. Or, if left in a damp box, they might die of pneumonia inside a few hours. But this is rare.

A mink's year normally starts in March when it is mated, breeding at the end of April. Almost every rancher has his own theories about breeding and none has yet found a way of artificially growing a larger mink so as to increase the size of the precious pelt. But they are all trying.

Qualities vary, of course. The standard mink is very dark brown in colour, almost black; it is the most common. Then comes the silver blue, a smoky blue animal with a very soft fur. Dearest at the moment is one called "Breath of Spring," whose coat is a perfect pale grey blue but whose smell denies its name. In Canadian ranches they are, to-day, producing pastel-shaded and sapphire minks; but they are keeping the breeding secrets to themselves.

The Strongest Strain

BREEDING is a never-ending job. Each animal is entered in a log book, its characteristics considered, the quality of its fur noted. A precious mink might be in-bred, i.e., mated with a near relation, but after two generations or so, this reduces the normal litter from, say, five or six to maybe one—or none.

Normally the animals are line-bred which means mating the best mink of one type with the best of another, but here again the standard or dark brown strain is strongest and always reappears on top. Breeding a standard with a white mink may produce in the first year, say, up to eight standards and one white kitt; in the second year, the white will have disappeared completely.

By the end of April, the female is placed in a box by herself. For a month the breeders will not know what their efforts have produced, for she must not be disturbed. "This," says Mr. Hicks, "is the most exciting time of all." The farm attendants spend a lot of time around the cages, listening anxiously for the first tiny squeaks of the newborn minks, tiny little balls of fur, the length of a cigarette and, as yet, invisible in the closed box.

One calendar month after the first squeak is heard, the box is opened and the litter, big or small, common or precious, is inspected, notes are taken, the kitts being graded and sexed. The mother's food ration is then increased; she gets eggs (one egg a day between three females) and milk and the best of care while she is feeding her young. At five or six weeks old the kitts are weaned and when eight weeks old they are split up into their own cages. Then they are fed to the limit: two or three feeds a day, day in and day out.

By early November, all minks have been carefully studied and graded, the best are kept for breeding the following spring and the rest are humanely killed and then pelted.

For Mr. Hicks, his family and helpers, mink farming has become more than a mere hobby; it is a serious job with registers to be kept, visitors from all over the country to be shown around and accounts to be attended to.

Despite the fact that he has made a name for supplying the best live minks to would-be farmers, thus reducing his roll call, Mr. Hicks obtained 180 pelts out of the 1952 breeding season (gaining four prizes at a recent show); handsome, glistening pelts with the quality of the world's longest lasting fur.

Premium on Glamour

WHAT makes mink so coveted? Mr. Hicks has his own theory: it is, he says, the best, most beautiful and hardest wearing fur in the world. That is what makes it expensive in the end but there are other factors: the skill of the furrier, the rarity of the really fine pelt, the slow breeding of the amazing little creature and the fact that the Chancellor of the Exchequer clamps down a purchase tax of 105 per cent. on every fur coat sold, a premium on glamour.

So far, British mink ranchers may be unimportant compared with their American counterparts: but their stock is growing and it is good to know that our national resourcefulness allied to our inclement weather are producing the thing that every woman everywhere always wants: a mink coat. ●

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Charles Philip Arthur George

(Continued from page 12)

AFTER the ceremony, Prince Charles was carried into the White Drawing Room, where one of the three christening cakes was cut and handed round. The Prince's sponsors were the late King, Queen Mary, Princess Margaret, the King of Norway, Prince George of Greece, the Dowager Marchioness of Milford Haven, Lady Brabourne and the Hon. David Bowes-Lyon.

Now that Princess Elizabeth has ascended the Throne, Prince Charles has automatically become Duke of Cornwall, by Charter of Edward III in 1339. He will also, by customary Royal creation, become Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester. When Prince Charles can write, he will sign his Christian name only. Later, on becoming Prince of Wales, he will sign "Charles P."

The Queen was fortunate that in her early years her mother, as Duchess of York, was able to devote a great deal of personal attention to the upbringing of her two children. Much of Her Majesty's character can be attributed to the loving care she received from her mother in those early years. She, however, is not so well placed in some respects; as heir presumptive, and now as Sovereign there is greater demand on her time for public duty, than was the case with her mother, before she became Queen.

In these circumstances, a good deal of the detailed care of Prince Charles must fall upon his nurse and other members of the household. But the routine is laid down by the Queen and her care is no less than if she personally carried out the details. It is not surprising that many nannies enjoy to the end of their lives the affection of those whose early years owe so much to their care and influence, but to be chosen as Nannie to a prospective King of England is not an unmixed blessing. The honour is matched by ever present responsibility.

Miss Lightbody was appointed to take charge of Prince Charles when he was one month old. She had behind her 24 years' experience in nurseries before going to Princess Elizabeth as head nurse. Before this, she had already seen service with the Royal Family, as head nurse to the children of the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester.

Value of Routine.

MISS LIGHTBODY is a Scotswoman who looks very much younger than her many years of service would suggest. To supplement her long and varied experience, she has a progressive outlook, which enables her to keep abreast of the advances made in her profession.

Above all else, Miss Lightbody recognises that the secret of the successful upbringing of happy and contented children is *routine*. Regular habits, such as bedtime, morning sleep, outings, and simple meals at specified times must be rigidly observed.

One effect upon the child of regular routine is a feeling of security. It is the hallmark of a good mother and of a good nurse to inspire this feeling in the child. Not only by insistence upon regular habits, but in such things as the way she holds the baby, seeing that it is comfortable and dry and in so many ways that make the child feel happy and confident. With this confidence comes ready obedience —and this is the foundation of successful upbringing.

Prince Charles was seven-and-a-half months old when his parents moved into Clarence House.

The nurseries are on an upper floor, being shut off from the main staircase by a gate. The landing makes with a central corridor a letter T, the rooms opening out from the corridor.

The rooms comprise a large nursery-cum-dining room, two bedrooms, bathroom, a small kitchen with a washing sink in it, and a hot cupboard.

Prince Charles and Princess Anne sleep on firm hard mattresses, as these are hygienic and keep their spines nice and straight. Their pillows are made of hair, also for reasons of hygiene. Children who sleep with soft down pillows are apt to bury their faces in them, thus obstructing the flow of fresh air into their lungs.

"Treasure Cabinet."

THE nursery contains a long mahogany table, a sofa and two comfortable chairs. A delightful piece of furniture is a cabinet given by Queen Mary to Princess Anne in which to keep her treasures. It is made of Australian mahogany and consists of a cabinet with glass doors above and drawers and a cupboard below. In the upper part is a miniature tea service and two little gold elephants, their skin and trappings enamelled in colour.

The elephants were a gift from Princess Anne's godfather, Lord Mountbatten. Queen Mary gave a "treasure cabinet" to each of her great-grandchildren; Prince Charles' decorates the landing.

The nursery also contains two model Cornish cottages, which were given to the Queen as a wedding present and Prince Charles loves to play with these. He is also greatly attached to another of his

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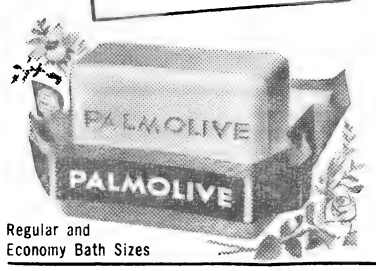

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mother's presents. This is the model Welsh cottage called "Y Brwythyn Bach to Gyeltt," which means "the little house with the thatched roof." This was given to the Queen by the Welsh people on her sixth birthday and stands in the grounds of Royal Lodge, Windsor.

It is large enough for a child of six to walk about in, open doors, sit on the chairs, and lie on the bed. Prince Charles loves to make himself busy in it, dusting, tidying-up and making the beds. He also enjoys turning the taps on and off and filling the white bath. The electic lights are a constant joy.

On a chair by the window in a corner of the nursery sits Prince Charles' beloved Teddy Bear. This is his supreme favourite, followed by Brumas; but Teddy is his bed-fellow. Like most Babies, Prince Charles sucked his thumb, and this habit was cured by giving him a Harrington Square to cuddle.

"Heavens, trails behind us; we're being followed."

The keynote of all the rooms is simplicity and economy. The only touches of luxury are the lovely flowers in the nursery, of which there are usually two vases.

On the morning of Prince Charles' christening day, two ladies from the Food Office arrived at Buckingham Palace with the Prince's green ration book. This is no insignificant detail; it is eloquent alike of our constitutional monarchy and of the late King's personal feelings towards everything which affected his subjects.

Fortunately, the rationing system is indulgent to very young children, so that the staple foods of childhood, such as milk and eggs, are available in sufficient quantities for healthy growth. The food that Prince Charles gets is such as can be enjoyed by most other British children.

Mothers will all have their own views on the treatment of the young, but if a plain and wholesome diet is followed, then the child should be contented and sleep well, as is the case with Prince Charles.

Being healthy, he can eat almost anything, but he is not allowed rich cakes or pastries. His sweets are strictly rationed and he is only given one or two a day, usually at midday, never at night.

Nana's Trials.

BECAUSE all the world loves a baby, royal babies are objects of especial interest and this adds to the trials of the nannie. Women and children and even men hang about in the hope of catching a glimpse of Prince Charles or Princess Anne. So Nannie (or "Nana" as Miss Lightbody is affectionately called) has constantly to think of ways and means of avoiding too much publicity for her Royal charges.

This is not because the Queen minds the children being seen, but as Prince Charles is not told of his importance in the scheme of things, it would be bad for him or for the little Princess to think that they were constantly the centre of attention, Nana has therefore, to devise plans to give the children their daily exercise as inconspicuously as possible.

While Princess Anne is sleeping in the garden or the summer-house, Prince Charles has his usual morning outing, generally in the Park, where he sometimes feeds the ducks or watches the Changing of the Guard. On returning from his walk, he is given a drink of fruit juice, after which he has his midday rest until one o'clock. In the afternoon, both children go out.

Prince Charles is devoted to his little sister and at first looked upon her as his own property. He is intensely interested in her progress, whether it is in the cutting of a new tooth, or a fresh addition to her small vocabulary.

Like so many brothers and sisters, the Prince and Princess are quite unalike in temperament. Prince Charles is a rather thoughtful and serious child, with a good sense of humour, and is very easily trained. Princess Anne, young as she is, is more like quicksilver, restless and very intelligent.

Both children cut their first teeth at about the same age, between eight and nine months. This is not a sign of backwardness, but means that the mother has taken care of herself before the babies were born. The babies' general bone formation is extra strong and in consequence the teeth, being sturdier, take longer to come through.

Prince Charles has now got to the stage of loving stories, picture books and nursery rhymes. In the early morning, before getting up, he looks at his picture books and sings nursery rhymes to himself, one of his favourites being "Pop Goes the Weasel."

He has a very good memory and will often point out that a sentence has been missed out of an oft-repeated tale. "Baba the Elephant" is one of his favourite stories.

A Great Favourite.

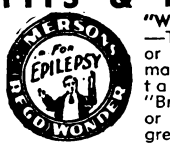
LIKE his mother and grandmother Prince Charles loves music. His speciality is organ music, which he will listen to rapturously, sitting quite still. He also makes music for himself on his toy trumpet.

The family life at Clarence House is all important. Between 9 and 9.15 in the morning, Prince Charles goes down to see his mother and father and stays with them until it is time for his morning outing. Every evening, unless public duties intervene, the Queen goes up to the nursery and helps Miss Lightbody to bath the children and put them to bed.

A great favourite of Prince Charles is his grandmother. His little face lights up when he sets his eyes on her and he runs to meet her.

The new Queen follows her parents in being deeply religious. In the case of all of them, this inner feeling finds outward expression in simplicity in their own lives and in great kindliness to others. In the home, it provides the supreme element in the upbringing of Prince Charles. ●

FITS & EPILEPSY



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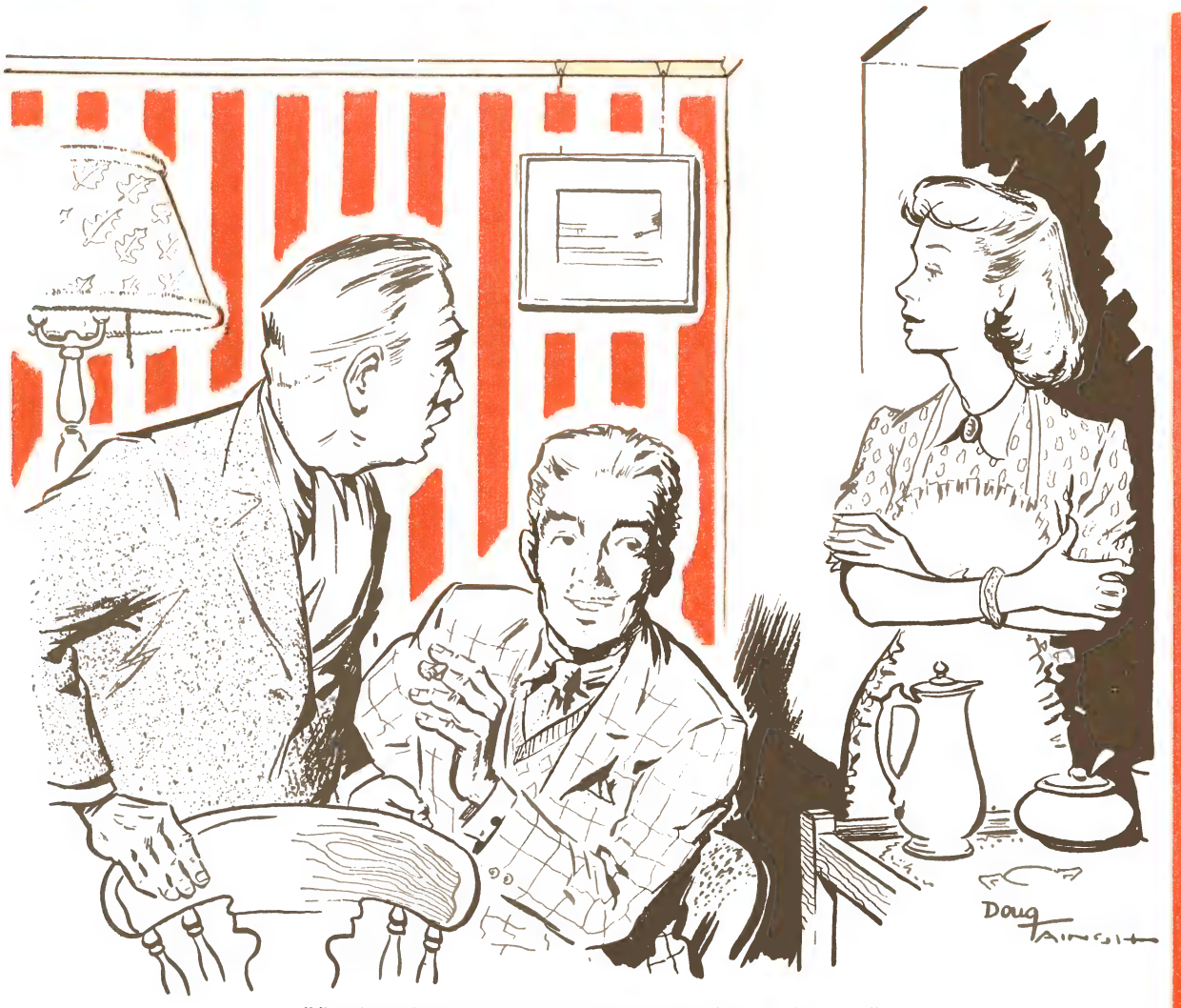

"'I think it's the silliest idea I ever heard of,' said Milly . . ."

THE back door stood open. Milly knocked once, because she was by nature a polite girl. As she expected, there was no answer, so she walked through the house to the study.

Mr. Edwin Pitt reluctantly put down his book to take the letter from her. It was a short, pencilled note, but Mrs. Muspratt had managed to spread it over a large sheet of white butcher's paper that, it was obvious, had already done duty round the meat.

Dear Mr. Pitt,

I am sorry I can't come for a few days as I am sick in bed with rheumatism. (Mr. Pitt mentally gave Mrs. Muspratt marks for spelling.) *Herewith my niece Milly. I taught her all she knows about looking after a house and everything so she will be good for you. I will be back on the job soon.*

Hoping this finds you as it leaves me,

Ada Muspratt.

Mr. Pitt smiled briefly at Ada's complimentary closure. He handed the letter back to Milly without comment and returned to Professor Bibelot's learned thesis, *"The Scientific Choosing of a Mate."*

"What time do you want your lunch?"

Mr. Pitt looked up with a start. Milly was still standing there, her big brown eyes fixed placidly on him.

"Oh, whenever you're ready, Milly." Mr. Pitt half-heartedly made to rise from his chair.

"Do you know where everything is?"

"I'll find them," said Milly. She went out to the kitchen and Mr. Pitt could not help noticing that she was a big young woman who planted her feet solidly on the floor. But there was an air of calm capability about her that was reassuring. She would be quite a change from her ancient aunt, who darted round the house like a one-fanged dragon-fly. And it was a long time since he had been consulted as to when he wanted a meal. It was quite a pleasant little change. Still he didn't want to be bothered with such piffling details — now, where the devil had he left off?

But Mr. Pitt was destined not to get much further with Professor Bibelot that morning. A pleasant red face was thrust in the open window and a voice bellowed:

"What about a game of golf, old man?"

Before Mr. Pitt could reply, the rest of Mr. Dunkley's body scrambled over the sill into the study.

"No, thanks, Walter," Mr. Pitt replied shortly. "Not today."

"Why not, Edwin, old man? Beautiful day. Sun shining. Fresh breeze blowing. Be lovely on the course. Get your lungs full of our wonderful mountain air. Do you the world of good."

"No!" said Mr. Pitt again.

"Hello!" exclaimed Mr. Dunkley, entirely unabashed by his reception. "What are you on to now?" He stooped and peered at the title. "Deep

stuff, eh? Thought for a moment you might have been on another perpetual-motion machine."

"It worked," Mr. Pitt defended.

"I'll say it worked." Mr. Dunkley gave a delighted chuckle. "You'd have flooded the whole street if we hadn't managed to cut the water off."

Mr. Pitt gazed at him sourly for a moment. Then a wonderful idea flashed into his mind that banished all memories of the perpetual-motion machine. He leant forward excitedly. "Walter, why haven't you married?"

"Same reason as you, I suppose," Mr. Dunkley answered promptly. "Never found a woman who suited me—or me her. Now, come on, old man. Get your clubs and we'll be on the first tee in five minutes. I've got the old bus outside."

"I know why you've never married, Walter," said Mr. Pitt, getting up and beginning to pace up and down. "You have never approached the matter scientifically, have you?"

"Umm," said Mr. Dunkley, picking up a walking stick and wiggling his feet into a golf stance.

Mr. Pitt's eyes gleamed.

"The present haphazard way of choosing a wife is outdated in this scientific age. This fellow here"—he tapped Professor Bibelot's book with a forefinger—"has some good ideas. I don't agree with everything he says, but he's on the right track. But to prove he's wrong where I think he is, I've got to do something practical."

"Umm," said Mr. Dunkley again, carefully restraining any interest he may have felt. He knew from long experience how difficult it was not to be carried away by his friend's terrific enthusiasms when he was in the first flush of a new idea.

Apart from the ill-fated perpetual-motion machine, he remembered the time when Mr. Pitt had conceived the idea of creating a new art form in pottery. It was Mr. Dunkley who had been called upon to install the electric kiln and afterwards it was he who had the embarrassing job of delivering as gifts the grotesque objects, which Mr. Pitt persisted in calling bowls and vases, to all their friends and acquaintances in the town. And the many that had been left over he had hidden in the rear of his garage.

Before the pottery craze, had been the time of the shadow photographs. For some unfathomable reason, Mr. Pitt had concentrated on pictures of shadows and reflections. Naturally, Walter had been impressed to act as the model. Looking round the study wall gave Mr. Dunkley the shivers. There were innumerable prints of his shadow going upstairs in the morning; going downstairs in the evening; and one trick shot of his morning shadow greeting his evening shadow. There was his reflection and the reflection of his shadow in still and rippling pools. Sometimes his shadow was short and stubby, sometimes it was thin and elongated. If ever there was a man who grew heartily sick of his shadow, it was Walter Dunkley.

The canary-breeding phase had not been too bad. That was one project that Mr. Dunkley did take an interest in. However, Edwin had tired very quickly of it and one day Mr. Dunkley found himself the possessor of over a hundred canaries and nowhere to keep them.

Before that there had been . . . Mr. Dunkley sighed. He could not remember a time when his friend had not been engrossed in something that somehow never seemed to turn out quite right.

"You're really a rather gregarious fellow, Walter," said Mr. Pitt musingly. "It's rather strange that you should live alone."

"What about yourself?" questioned Mr. Dunkley, changing his grip from the interlocking to the overlapping.

"I'm different. Besides, old Ada sees to the housekeeping for me."

"How you've existed on her cooking as long as you have beats me."

Milly appeared at the door.

"Want your lunch?" she asked. "It's ready."

"Stay for lunch, Walter," Mr. Pitt invited eagerly. "I want to ask you a few questions about your youth, your education, your likes and dislikes and——"

"Where's Ada?" Mr. Dunkley interrupted.

"She has rheumatism. This is her niece, Milly."

"Well, in that case," said Mr. Dunkley, "I don't mind if I do." He was glad he did, for Milly's omelet was excellent. So much so that he gave only the briefest answers to Mr. Pitt's quizzing.

"Well," he said, pushing back his chair at last. "That was a delicious lunch, Milly."

"Glad you liked it," said Milly, clearing the table.

Mr. Pitt decided that it was useless leaving so important a matter to Walter himself. Choosing a wife had to be done on scientific principles.

Walter turned to Mr. Pitt.

"If you won't play golf, I think I'll go home and have a nap."

WHILE Walter slept, Mr. Pitt was busy on his behalf. First he wrote down the names of all the eligible women he knew in the town. He had never realised before that there were so many of them. There's something in that, he pondered. Do all mountain towns attract such a high percentage of widows and spinsters?

The problem was, where to begin? It was probably best to start with those whom he knew well. Mrs. Cole was first choice.

Armed with a notebook and pencil, he set off on the mission that was to cause the greatest turmoil and dissension that the town had ever known. Not since that day in 1942 when Mr. Pitt, on duty as an aeroplane spotter, thought he saw three parachutists bale out of a Jap plane, had there been such uproar.

Mrs. Cole was an attractively plump widow with an excellent complexion and a good-humoured glint in her eye. She had often cast an appraising glance at Edwin Pitt, but somehow conversation with him never got round to any topic upon which the foundation of something deeper than friendship could be built.

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After the first shock of his opening question, she was delighted.

"I may have thought of marrying again, Edwin," she said, her breath coming back in a laugh. "But nobody—that is, nobody presentable enough—has asked me."

Mr. Pitt was pleased. "Would you mind giving me some additional information?"

"It all depends on what you want to know." Mrs. Cole gave another laugh, accompanied by a roguish glance.

"Just a few questions about your environment when you were a child and since. What habits, etcetera, you'd like and dislike in a prospective husband."

"But, Edwin, what is all this about?"

Mr. Pitt's cherubic face regarded her earnestly and her heart gave a pit-a-pat that she had not felt for more years than she cared to remember.

"I'm conducting a little survey," he said, non-committally, "and I would be grateful for any help you can give me."

MRS. ADAMS, his next choice, greeted him effusively.

"Dear Mr. Pitt! It's been such a long time since I had a talk with you that I wondered if you were offended over what I said about your—er—pottery?"

"What was that?"

"Oh, you've forgotten? How generous of you! Do come inside. I've a new micro-groove recording that I know you'll love to hear."

"Ah, music," said Mr. Pitt. "Any particular preferences?"

"I adore Strauss. His wonderful, dreamy waltzes waft me out of this world."

Mr. Pitt flicked open his notebook. A momentary alarm flashed on Mrs. Adams' face.

"What is that for?"

"Mrs. Adams, would you be interested in marrying again?"

"Huh?" she gasped inelegantly. "Oh, Mr. Pitt, you adorable man! You do come out with the naughtiest things!"

Mr. Pitt frowned and Mrs. Adams became serious instantly.

"I'm conducting a survey of far-reaching importance and I want your help."

"You can count on me," Mrs. Adams declared fervently, "to help you in any way I can!"

IT was late in the afternon when Mr. Pitt managed to interview the third prospect on his list. Miss Holpen was weeding her garden. He leant over the picket fence to pose the famous question.

"Have you ever thought of getting married?"

Miss Holpen straightened up with a shriek. When she saw who it was and the meaning of his question sank in, two red spots of anger burnt in her cheeks.

"How insulting of you! I've always given you the credit of being a gentleman, Edwin, if an eccentric one. But I will not tolerate such rudeness. Go away, you horrible man!" She raised her gardening fork in a threatening gesture.

"But I'm serious," Mr. Pitt protested, doggedly standing his ground.

Miss Holpen considered him. "It should be obvious even to the meanest intellect that the idea of marriage occurs to every woman at some time or another," she observed cuttingly. "Why?"

"I've become interested in the scientific choosing of a mate."

"Have you now?" Despite herself, Miss Holpen looked at Mr. Pitt with new interest. There was something likeable about him, a kind of boyish eager innocence and it was common knowledge that old Ada Muspratt had been robbing him for years. . .

Mr. Pitt beamed. "Thank you, Edith. I knew you wouldn't let me down." Out came the notebook and pencil.

WALTER appeared again just before tea. He found Mr. Pitt transcribing from his notebook to a number of record cards. Like the understanding fellow he was, he sat down and remained silent until Milly came in with the announcement that tea was ready.

"She seems a nice, intelligent young woman," Walter remarked.

"Yes," agreed Mr. Pitt absently. "You know, Walter, there's more to this business than I first thought. I'm going to get up early in the morning and go down to the shopping centre. I'm sure to see all the women on my list down there and it'll save a lot of time."

The idea of conducting the remaining interviews in the main street had, as did most of Mr. Pitt's ideas, some merit in it. He did meet the women he wanted, but his actions soon had the whole shopping centre buzzing. And this, unluckily for Mr. Pitt, was the main factor that brought his scheme to disaster.

It was observed that he accosted certain ladies and that his conversations with them all began in the same peculiar manner.

First a shocked, incredulous expression appeared on her face. Then after a few more words she would smile—a shy, interested smile. Some actually giggled. There would be earnest converse for some time and then Mr. Pitt would tip his hat and the lady would go off half-smiling and slightly dazed. While she was walking away Mr. Pitt would scribble furiously in a notebook.

It was enough to make anyone bite their fingernails with curiosity. Everyone knew Mr. Pitt and his ideas. He was, as Ben Brent, the bookmaker, said, as good as a sideshow. But this latest caper of his was so mystifying that all the shops were jumping with people who were itching to find out what he was up to now.

And, of course, it was not long before they did find out. When they did, a gust of laughter billowed along the street that rustled the leaves of the big elm tree in the memorial square. The echoes of the laughter continued up streets and down streets to the limits of the town, and the ladies concerned felt their ears tingling with same and mortification. It was not surprising that most of them were angry. They had not imagined that Mr. Pitt was conducting a mass survey; each thought that she was the only one interviewed. Now they felt that they had been betrayed into a ridiculous position and that something should be done about him.

"I tell you what's the cause of it," said Harper, the carrier, sagely to the group of loungers on the seat under the elm tree. "He's got sick of old Ada Muspratt's cooking at last."

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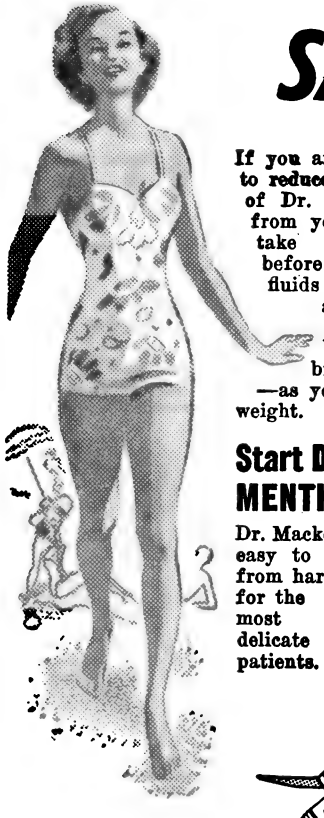

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Ben Brent pondered this remark and made Mrs. Adams favourite at two to one against. Mrs. Cole was his second favourite, while for some of the ladies who were, as Ben said, "maiden gallopers in the matrimonial stakes," you could write your own ticket. Within Ben's well-known limits, of course.

Indicative of the great interest in the affair, betting was brisk for several days. During that time, neither Mr. Pitt nor the ladies concerned were sighted. The originator of the scheme was busy sorting and classifying the information he had collected.

And the ladies? Harper brought the bad news to the group under the elm tree.

"All bets are off," he announced gloomily. "The women have had a meeting and they've declared Mr. Pitt black."

"They can't do that," said Ben Brent indignantly. He had laid a very adroit book that would have brought him a handsome profit no matter which starter won.

"They *have* done it," said Harper, not displeased with the consternation his news had brought. "They say that what he's doing is an insult to the decent women of the community and none of 'em are going to have anything more to do with thim."

"That's what they say," laughed Ben. "I'm willing to bet that there will be a couple who break from the barrier. Old Edwin's too good a catch for someone to miss this golden opportunity. I know women too well. There'll be a couple of backsliders before long."

"You'd better stick to horses," snorted Harper.

"I'll lay you tens," said Ben, nettled.

He was snapped up in several directions. The affair had now assumed a broader aspect.

SO it was that when Mr. Pitt next issued forth with his notebook he found himself rudely snubbed by his prospects. He was dismayed and puzzled at the hostile reception he encountered. Such a general change of front was incredible. What could have happened in the last few days?

The vicar took pity on his distress. He erased the smile from his lips and went up to him.

"The trouble is, Edwin," he explained, "that you are reversing one of the accepted practices of our society. There are some who say that you are trying to upset the whole structure of our social life."

"I don't understand you."

"Well," said the vicar, "we have grown to accept the axiom that it is the woman who chooses a husband and not vice versa. I grant you that it is done in a very subtle manner. In fact, so subtly that many a woman will stoutly deny it. Edwin, you are striking a mortal blow at this established order."

"And why not?" demanded Mr. Pitt hotly. "The present method—or I should say lack of method—is the reason why the divorce rate is as high as it is. My way," said Mr. Pitt, completely forgetting any debt to Professor Bibelot, "will make for happier, more stable, more lasting marriages. I recognise that I am struggling against a popular superstition, but when I think of the illustrious men who have done the same, I——"

The vicar raised his hands and retreated a pace.

"Not so fast. I am not attacking your theory, nor for that matter am I favouring it. All I am trying to tell you is that you have aroused great hostility."

Mr. Pitt was still angry and frustrated when he reached home. He unburdened himself to Mr. Dunkley.

"Don't take it so hardly, old man," Walter comforted. "I reckon the vicar knows what he's talking about. And what's more, I heard that Ben Brent thinks the same, but something will happen before long."

Mr. Pitt toyed moodily with his record cards. "I've only half-finished," he complained. "I can't make any decision for you with only half the data. It wouldn't prove anything and it wouldn't be fair to you."

Mr. Dunkley was touched by his friend's consideration. He drew in a deep breath, but before he could say what was on his mind, Milly came in.

"Tea's ready, you two," she said.

"A good feed will cheer you up, old man," said Walter, his own face brightening. "We're lucky we've still got Milly. By the way, how is your aunt, Milly?"

"She's pretty well, thank you. She said last night that she might start again tomorrow."

Walter went in to tea with a face as long as Mr. Pitt's. They ate in lugubrious silence until Milly came to clear the table.

"Milly," said Mr. Pitt suddenly. "Like everyone else, you probably know what's been going on?"

"I think the whole thing is the silliest idea you've ever had," Milly cut in bluntly. "If you really want a wife, why don't you get one the same as everybody else does?"

"I'll tell you why," said Mr. Pitt. "Did you say — if *I* wanted a wife? But I don't! I'm doing it for Walter."

Milly looked from one to the other and shook her head despairingly. "I give up. Do you want a wife that badly?" she asked Mr. Dunkley.

"Oh, no," Walter declaimed.

"What a pair of silly old buffers you are!" Then she smiled and her smile took away any sting in her words. "If I were you two, I'd sit tight until the whole thing blows over."

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"What about my experiment?" shouted Mr. Pitt. "I'll never——"

He was cut short by a loud peal on the door bell. Milly left the room and they heard the murmur of voices.

"It's Mrs. Adams. I've put her in your study," said Milly.

"The dam has burst, Walter," Mr. Pitt cried joyfully.

"Steady now, old man," counselled Walter. He shifted uneasily on his chair. "Let's not rush this."

The door pealed again.

"Mrs. Cole," announced Milly.

Mr. Pitt rubbed his hands gleefully. "It won't be long now before I can complete the great experiment."

Walter filled his pipe nervously, and the door bell pealed for the third time.

"Another one!"

"It's going to be embarrasing," Walter mumured. "They still think it's you."

Mr. Pitt waved an impatient hand for silence. They heard Milly open the door. There was the murmur of voices and the shuffle and clatter of many feet on the doorstep.

Milly returned to the dining-room. "They're all yours," she said. "The whole lot of them. If I were you I'd go out the back way."

"I knew this would happen." Mr. Pitt was almost ecstatic. "This night will go down in history. This is the first general acceptance of my theory. Come on, Walter!"

Milly watched them go into the study. "They shouldn't be let out on their own," she said to herself. "What those old chooks will do to them is nobody's business." A look of apprehension crossed her placid face. What would Aunt Ada say if one of them hooked Mr. Pitt? But what could she do?

Mr. Pitt was so bubbling over with the capitulation of the women that it was some time before he noticed that the atmosphere in the room was not what it should have been.

Mrs. Cole and Mrs. Adams sat, flushed and defiant, on one side of the room. Ranged along the other wall were the rest of the eligible ladies, looking equally flushed.

Mr. Pitt's happy chatter died away feebly and there was a deathly silence. Then Miss Holpen stepped forward and fixed Mr. Pitt with an autocratic eye.

"Edwin," she said, and her voice had the freezing bite of wind off snow-covered mountains, "we have decided that you must choose a wife without any more of this ridiculous nonsense. We thought that the best plan would be to ignore you altogether, but unfortunately we had some traitors in our midst." She cast a withering glance at Mesdames Cole and Adams, and continued: "And so we have decided that you must choose now before us all. It may so happen that the one you choose will reject you. If that happens, then you may take another pick."

Mr. Pitt's mouth had been open for some time. Now that it was his turn to speak he found that he could not.

"Don't stand there like a stuffed dummy, Edwin. Speak up!"

"You have all misunderstood me," he said hoarsely. "I don't want to marry anyone."

"What!" The outraged cry sprang from a dozen throats.

"I was doing it for Walter," quavered Mr. Pitt.

Miss Holpen stilled the uproar with an upraised hand. "A most unlikely story," she said grimly.

"It's true," Mr. Pitt protested. "Ask him?"

A dozen pair of eyes swivelled on to the unfortunate Mr. Dunkley. He cowered back under the impact. He was not a man who gave his friendship lightly. He would cheerfully have laid down his life for his friend if need be, but this was something entirely outside his experience. How could he—even for Edwin Pitt—say yes?

"Enough of this prevarication, Edwin," Miss Holpen stormed.

"Walter!"

Mr. Pitt's appeal was like a voice crying out in the night. Walter's naturally red face became choleric. He struggled to speak, but the words were caught away down in his chest. He gazed at his friend with the stricken look of an injured dog.

"Edwin!"

There was a sharp knock on the door.

"Excuse me," said Milly. "Shall I bring in the tea things now? Oh, Mr. Pitt, a phone message came for you this afternoon. I'm sorry, but I forgot all about it."

"What was it?" he croaked.

"It was from the city zoo. Those two baby apes you ordered from Africa were landed yesterday and they want to know if you're ready for them. You know—the ones you intend bringing up like children."

A gasp of horror filled the study.

"Of course!" Could that strong, resonant voice be Walter's? Mr. Pitt wondered dazedly. He listened as it continued: "Your most daring experiment yet, Edwin! You need a wife to help bring them up. And if you're lucky you may have a little one of your own so that you can compare the development of man and beast."

"Ah, yes," gasped Mr. Pitt.

"Who's going to be the lucky little woman?" asked Walter, gazing round in diabolical fashion. "You, Mrs. Adams?"

"For heaven's sake!" exclaimed that lady. She got up and the front door bounced on its hinges behind her.

"Mrs. Cole?" Walter was enjoying himself now.

Mrs. Cole laughed. "Not for me," she said.

"Miss Holpen?"

Suspicion glinted in Miss Holpen's eyes. She swept from the house.

Milly leant with relief against the door jamb. Aunt Ada could not reproach her now for failing to take care of her cushy job. When she had agreed to do it, she had had no idea that it would involve protecting Mr. Pitt from matrimony.

"Milly!" shouted Mr. Dunkley, mopping his brow. "You wonderful girl! What intelligence! And what a cook! Why, I've got a good mind to propose—Edwin, what can we do for Milly to show our—Edwin, wake up, old man! They're gone. Everything's all right."

Mr. Pitt came slowly out of a trance. "You know," he said dreamily, "I read something about someone bringing up a baby ape."

"We all have. Luckily for us."

"It could be," Mr. Pitt continued as if he had not heard Walter, "it could be a very interesting experiment! Where can I get one?" ●

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DOUBLE TAKE

By ZOA SHERBOURNE

It has usually been regarded as awkward to see ourselves as others see us, but it isn't always so bad.

IT had all started on that day, seventeen years before, when they brought Kenny to her in the hospital. Of course, he was just a few hours old, and yelling his head off, which did nothing to add to his charm, but even then Norma was sure that her son was the most beautiful baby in the world.

When Norma's friends came bearing blue-ribboned gifts, they were evasive. Even her mother had remarked, "It's a good thing he's a boy. Looks are so much more important to a girl." Then she had blushed at her tactlessness and added, "He's certainly healthy!"

"Maybe he'll change," Norma told herself when Kenny was five . . . and ten and thirteen and finally seventeen. But by that time she was reconciled to the fact that he was never going to change.

His sandy hair sternly resisted every effort of brush and barber. His pale-blue eyes gave him the expression of an absent-minded owl. His teeth were prominent and his nose too long. At school, though he was popular with his classmates, he'd earned the appalling nickname, "Old Horse Face."

Years of living with Kenny had not immunized Norma to his looks. He was her darling and her pride, but she never overlooked a chance to improve his social accomplishments. Once, when she had packed Kenny off for piano lessons and later to dancing school, Big Ken remonstrated.

"Just what are you trying to prove?" he'd asked. "The kid isn't a freak, you know. He just happens to be a little on the homely side."

"Don't you want your son to be well adjusted?" Norma asked heatedly. Secretly, she wondered why Kenny couldn't have inherited some of her husband's good looks.

"I'm not worried. He has your charm." Ken dropped the discussion and retired behind his newspaper . . .

She knew the day she had been subconsciously dreading was at hand when Kenny fell in love for the first time.

"Her name's Marilee Courtright," he told his mother dreamily. "Gosh, she's beautiful!"

Norma noted with a pang of pity how Kenny polished his shoes, scrubbed his teeth, and battled with his stubborn hair. He was norma's and she loved him dearly, but it was difficult to see how the glamorous creature whom Kenny had described could take "Old Horse Face" seriously.

"He couldn't fall for some ordinary-looking girl who'd be nice to him and good for his morale," she exploded to Ken one evening. "Oh, no—he has to fall in love with a glamour job who'll slap his ears down and ruin his self-confidence."

Ken stared at her. "Have you met her?"

"No, but I'm going to on Thursday," Norma retorted grimly. "Marilee is going to sing with the Glee Club."

AT the meeting they sat side by side in the crowded auditorium and watched the girls file on to the stage. Kenny was at the piano; he accompanied the Glee Club.

Norma's eyes passed over the first row of girls—the second. Her fingers tightened on Ken's arm. "Look—there she is. Just as Kenny described her. The blonde in blue."

Norma felt her heart plunge. She *was* beautiful. And probably getting a big kick out of Kenny's wide-eyed adoration. . . . No, not wide-eyed; Kenny squinted.

Wallowing in her own misery, Norma was only half aware that the programme was over when she felt a hand on her arm.

"Pardon me—you're Mrs. Norton, aren't you?"

Norma turned and looked at a pale, homely little blonde in a red dress. Her hair was curled into unnatural ringlets and her lipstick was uneven. She looked like a plain child dressed in her mother's clothing.

"Will you come with me, please? Kenny thought you might like to see the exhibits." The girl blushed scarlet, forgetting the rest of her well-rehearsed speech. "I—that is, Kenny — I told him I'd watch for you. I'm a friend of Kenny's—Marilee Courtright."

Norma stared at her. This, then, was the vision Kenny had described. "The eyes of love!" she thought. . . . "But how did you know I was Kenny's mother?" she asked. "Did Kenny point us out?"

"Oh, no—he didn't have to." The girl gave a shy smile. "He just told me to look for a woman who looked exactly like him, so of course I knew you immediately." ●

How the Brigadier Held the King

(Continued from page 19)

the base. Well, as I looked towards it, I was surprised to see projecting above the bush, and fastened apparently to the tree, a pair of fine riding boots with toes upwards. At first I thought that they were tied there, but as I looked harder I saw that they were secured by a great nail which was hammered through the foot of each. And then, suddenly, with a thrill of horror, I understood that these were not empty boots; and moving my head a little to the right, I was able to see who it was that had been fastened there, and why a fire had been lit beneath the tree. It is not pleasant to speak or to think of horrors, my friends, and I do not wish to give any of you bad dreams to-night—but I cannot take you among the Spanish guerrillas without showing you what kind of men they were, and the sort of warfare that they waged. I will only say that I understood why Monsieur Vidal's horse was waiting masterless in the grove, and that I hoped he had met this terrible fate with sprightliness and courage, as a good Frenchman ought.

It was not a very cheering sight for me, as you can imagine. When I had been with their chief in the grotto I had been so carried away by my rage at the cruel death of young Soubiron, who was one of the brightest lads who ever threw his thigh over a charger, that I had never given a thought to my own position. Perhaps it would have been more politic had I spoken the ruffian fair, but it was too late now. The cork was drawn and I must drain the wine. Besides, if the harmless commissariat man were put to such a death, what hope was there for me, who had snapped the spine of their lieutenant? No, I was doomed in any case, and it was as well perhaps that I should have put the best face on the matter. This beast could bear witness that Etienne Gerard had died as he had lived, and that one prisoner at least had not quailed before him. I lay there thinking of the various girls who would mourn for me, and of my dear old mother, and of the deplorable loss which I should be, both to my regiment and to the Emperor, and I am not ashamed to confess to you that I shed tears as I thought of the general consternation which my premature end would give rise to.

But all the time I was taking the very keenest notice of everything which might possibly help me. I am not a man who would lie like a sick horse waiting for the farrier sergeant and the pole-axe. First I would give a little tug at my ankle cords, and then another at those which were round my wrists, and all the time that I was trying to loosen them I was peering round to see if I could find something which was in my favour. There was one thing which was very evident. A hussar is but half formed without a horse, and there was my other half quietly grazing within thirty yards of me. Then I observed yet another thing. The path by which we had come over the mountains was so steep that a horse could only be led across it slowly and with difficulty, but in the other direction the ground appeared to be more open, and to lead straight down into a gently-sloping valley. Had I but my feet in yonder stirrups and my sabre in my hand, a single bold dash might take me out of the power of these vermin of the rocks.

I WAS still thinking it over and straining with my wrists and my ankles, when their chief came out from his grotto, and after some talk with his lieutenant, who lay groaning near the fire, they both nodded their heads and looked across at me. He then said some few words to the band, who clapped their hands and laughed uproariously. Things looked ominous, and I was delighted to feel that my hands were so far free that I could easily slip them through the cords if I wished. But with my ankles I feared that I could do nothing, for when I strained it brought such pain into my lance wound that I had to gnaw my moustache to keep from crying out. I could only lie still, half-free and half-bound, and see what turn things were likely to take.

For a little I could not make out what they were after. One of the rascals climbed up a well-grown fir tree upon one side of the glade, and tied a rope round the top of the trunk. He then fastened another rope in the same fashion to a similar tree upon the other side. The two loose ends were now dangling down, and I waited with some curiosity, and just a little trepidation also, to see what they would do next. The whole band pulled upon one of the ropes until they had bent the strong young tree down into a semicircle, and they then fastened it to a stump, so as to hold it so. When they had bent the other tree down in a similar fashion, the two summits were within a few feet of each other, though, as you understand, they would each spring back into their original position the instant that they were released. I already saw the diabolical plan which these miscreants had formed.

"I presume that you are a strong man, Colonel," said the chief, coming towards me with his hateful smile.

"If you will have the kindness to loosen these cords," I answered, "I will show you how strong I am."

"We were all interested to see whether you were as strong as these two young saplings," said he. "It is our intention, you see, to tie one end of each rope round your ankles and then let the trees go. If you are stronger than the trees, then, of course, no harm would be done; if, on the other hand, the trees are stronger than you, why, in that case, Colonel, we may have a souvenir of you upon each side of our little glade."

He laughed as he spoke, and at the sight of it the whole forty of them laughed also. Even now if I am in my darker humour, or if I have a touch of my old Lithuanian ague, I see in my sleep that ring of dark, savage faces, with their cruel eyes, and the firelight flashing upon their strong white teeth.

It is astonishing — and I have heard many make the same remark — how acute one's senses become at such a crisis as this. I am convinced that at no moment is one living so vividly, so acutely, as at the instant when a violent and foreseen death overtakes one. I could smell the resinous fagots, I could see every twig upon the ground, I could hear every rustle of the branches, as I have never smelled or seen or heard save at such times of danger. And so it was that long before anyone else, before even the time when the chief had addressed me, I had heard a low, monotonous sound, far away indeed, and yet coming nearer at every instant. At first it was but a murmur, a rumble, but by the time he had finished speaking, while the assassins were untying my ankles in order to lead me to the scene of my murder, I heard, as plainly as ever I heard anything in my life, the clinking of horseshoes and the jingling of bridle chains, with the clank of sabres against stirrup irons. Is it likely that I, who had lived with the light cavalry since the first hair shaded my lip, would mistake the sound of troopers on the march?

"Help, comrades, help!" I shrieked, and though they struck me across the mouth and tried to drag me up to the trees, I kept on yelling, "Help me, my brave boys! Help me, my children! They are murdering your colonel!"

For the moment my wounds and my troubles had brought on a delirium, and I looked

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for nothing less than my five hundred hussars, kettledrums and all, to appear at the opening of the glade.

BUT that which really appeared was very different to anything which I had conceived. Into the clear space there came galloping a fine young man upon a most beautiful roan horse. He was fresh-faced and pleasant-looking, with the most debonair bearing in the world and the most gallant way of carrying himself — a way which reminded me somewhat of my own. He wore a singular coat which had once been red all over, but which was now stained to the colour of a withered oak leaf wherever the weather could reach it. His shoulder straps, however, were of golden lace, and he had a bright metal helmet upon his head, with a coquettish white plume upon one side of its crest. He trotted his horse up the glade, while behind him rode four cavaliers in the same dress—all clean-shaven, with round, comely faces, looking to me more like monks than dragoons. At a short, gruff order they halted with a rattle of arms, while their leader cantered forward, the fire beating upon his eager face and the beautiful head of his charger. I knew, of course, by the strange coats that they were English. It was the first sight that I had ever had of them, but from their stout bearing and their masterful way I could see at a glance that what I had always been told was true, and that they were excellent people to fight against.

"Well, well, well!" cried the young officer, in sufficiently bad French, "what game are you up to here? Who was that who was yelling for help, and what are you trying to do to him?"

It was at that moment that I learned to bless those months which Obriant, the descendant of the Irish kings, had spent in teaching me the tongue of the English. My ankles had just been freed, so that I had only to slip my hands out of the cords, and with a single rush I had flown across, picked up my sabre where it lay by the fire, and hurled myself on to the saddle of poor Vidal's horse. Yes, for all my wounded ankle, I never put foot to stirrup, but was in the seat in a single bound. I tore the halter from the tree. and before these villains could so much as snap a pistol at me I was beside the English officer.

"I surrender to you, sir," I cried; though I daresay my English was not very much better than his French. "If you will look at that tree to the left you will see what these villains do to the honourable gentlemen who fall into their hands."

The first had flared up at that moment, and there was poor Vidal exposed before them, as horrible an object as one could see in a nightmare. "Godam!" cried the officer, and "Godam!" cried each of the four troopers, which is the same as with us when we cry "Mon Dieu!" Out rasped the five swords, and the four men closed up. One, who wore a sergeant's chevrons, laughed and clapped me on the shoulder.

"Fight for your skin, froggy," said he.

Ah, it was so fine to have a horse between my thighs and a weapon in my grip. I waved it above my head and shouted in my exultation. The chief had come forward with that odious smiling face of his.

"Your excellency will observe that this Frenchman is our prisoner," said he.

"You are a rascally robber," said the Englishmen, shaking his sword at him. "It is a disgrace to us to have such allies. By my faith, if Lord Wellington were of my mind we would swing you up on the nearest tree."

"But my prisoner?" said the brigand, in his suave voice.

"He shall come with us to the British camp."

"Just a word in your ear before you take him."

He approached the young officer, and then turning as quick as a flash, he fired his pistol in my face. The bullet scored its way through my hair and burst a hole on each side of my busby. Seeing that he had missed me, he raised the pistol and was about to hurl it at me when the English sergeant, with a single backhanded cut, nearly severed his head from his body. His blood had not reached the ground, nor the last curse died on his lips, before the whole horde was upon us, but with a dozen bounds and as many slashes we were all safely out of the glade, and galloping down the winding track which led to the valley.

It was not until we had left the ravine far behind us and were right out in the open fields that we ventured to halt, and to see what injuries we had sustained. For me, wounded and weary as I was, my heart was beating proudly, and my chest was nearly bursting my tunic to think that I, Etienne Gerard, had left this gang of murderers so much by which to remember me. My faith, they would think twice before they ventured again to lay hands upon one of the Third Hussars. So carried away was I that I made a small oration to these brave Englishmen, and told them who it was that they had helped to rescue. I would have spoken of glory also, and of the sympathies of brave men, but the officer cut me short.

"That's all right," said he. "Any injuries, Sergeant?"

"Trooper Jones' horse hit with a pistol bullet on the fetlock."

"Trooper Jones to go with us. Sergeant Halliday, with troopers Harvey and Smith, to keep to the right until they touch the vedettes of the German Hussars."

SO these three jingled away together, while the officer and I, followed at some distance by the trooper whose horse had been wounded, rode straight down in the direction of the English camp. Very soon we had opened our hearts, for we each liked the other from the beginning. He was of the nobility, this brave lad, and he had been sent out scouting by Lord Wellington to see if there were any signs of our advancing through the mountains. It is one advantage of a wandering life like mine, that you learn to pick up those bits of knowledge which distinguish the man of the world. I have, for example, hardly ever met a Frenchman who could repeat an English title correctly. If I had not travelled I should not be able to say with confidence that this young man's real name was Milor the Hon. Sir Russell, Bart., this last being an honourable distinction, so that it was as the Bart that I usually addressed him, just as in Spanish one might say "the Don."

As we rode beneath the moonlight in the lovely Spanish night, we spoke our minds to each other, as if we were brothers. We were both of an age, you see, both of the light cavalry also (the Sixteenth Light Dragoons was his regiment), and both with the same hopes and ambitions. Never have I learned to know a man so quickly as I did the Bart. He gave me the name of a girl whom he had loved at a garden called Vauxhall, and, for my own part, I spoke to him of little Coralie, of the opera. He took a lock of hair from his bosom, and I a garter. Then we nearly quarelled over hussar and dragoon, for he was absurdly proud of his regiment, and you should have

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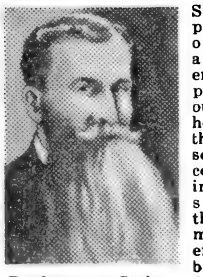

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seen him curl his lip and clap his hand to his hilt when I said that I hoped it might never be its misfortune to come in the way of the Third. Finally, he began to speak about what the English call sport, and he told such stories of the money which he had lost over which of two cocks could kill the other, or which of two men could strike the other the most in a fight for a prize, that I was filled with astonishment. He was ready to bet upon anything in the most wonderful manner, and when I chanced to see a shooting star he was anxious to bet that he would see more than me, twenty-five francs a star, and it was only when I explained that my purse was in the hands of the brigands that he would give over the idea.

Well, we chatted away in this very amiable fashion until the day began to break, when suddenly we heard a great volley of musketry from somewhere in front of us. It was very rocky and broken ground, and I thought, although I could see nothing, that a general engagement had broken out. The Bart laughed at my idea, however, and explained that the sound came from the English camp, where every man emptied his piece each morning so as to make sure of having a dry priming.

"In another mile we shall be up with the outposts," said he.

I glanced round at this, and I perceived that we had trotted along at so good a pace during the time that we were keeping up our pleasant chat, that the dragoon with the lame horse was altogether out of sight. I looked on every side, but in the whole of that vast rocky valley there was no one save only the Bart and I — both of us armed, you understand, and both of us well mounted. I began to ask myself whether after all it was quite necessary that I should ride that mile which would bring me to the British outposts.

NOW, I wish to be very clear with you on this point, my friends, for I would not have you think that I was acting dishonourably or ungratefully to the man who had helped me away from the brigands. You must remember that of all duties the strongest is that which a commanding officer owes to his men. You must also bear in mind that war is a game which is played under fixed rules, and when these rules are broken one must at once claim the forfeit. If, for example, I had given a parole, then I should have been an infamous wretch had I dreamed of escaping. But no parole had been asked of me. Out of over-confidence, and the chance of the lame horse dropping behind, the Bart had permitted me to get upon equal terms with him. Had it been I who had taken him, I should have used him as courteously as he had me, but, at the same time, I should have respected his enterprise so far as to have deprived him of his sword, and seen that I had at least one guard beside myself. I reined up my horse and explained this to him, asking him at the same time whether he saw any breach of honour in my leaving him.

He thought about it, and several times repeated that which the English say when they mean, "Mon Dieu."

"You would give me the slip, would you?" said he.

"If you can give no reason against it."

"The only reason that I can think of," said the Bart, "is that I should instantly cut your head off if you were to attempt it."

"Two can play at that game, my dear Bart," said I.

"Then we'll see who can play at it best," he cried, pulling out his sword.

I had drawn mine also, but I was quite determined not to hurt this admirable young man who had been my benefactor.

"Consider," said I, "you say that I am your prisoner. I might with equal reason say that you are mine. We are alone here, and though I have no doubt that you are an excellent swordsman, you can hardly hope to hold your own against the best blade in the six light cavalry brigades."

His answer was a cut at my head. I parried and shore off half of his white plume. He thrust at my breast. I turned his point and cut away the other half of his cockade.

"Curse your monkey tricks!" he cried, as I wheeled my horse away from him.

"Why should you strike at me?" said I. "You see that I will not strike back."

"That's all very well," said he; "but you've got to come along with me to the camp."

"I shall never see the camp," said I.

"I'll lay you nine to four you do," he cried, as he made at me, sword in hand.

But those words of his put something new into my head. Could we not decide the matter in some better way than fighting? The Bart was placing me in such a position that I should have to hurt him, or he would certainly hurt me. I avoided his rush, though his sword-point was within an inch of my neck.

"I have a proposal," I cried. "We shall throw dice as to which is the prisoner of the other."

He smiled at this. It appealed to his love of sport.

"Where are your dice?" he cried.

"I have none."

"Nor I. But I have cards."

"Cards let it be," said I.

"And the game?"

"I leave it to you."

"Ecarte, then — the best of three."

I could not help smiling as I agreed, for I do not suppose that there were three men in France who were my masters at the game. I told the Bart as much as we dismounted. He smiled also as he listened.

"I was counted the best player at Watier's," said he. "With even luck you deserve to get off if you beat me."

So we tethered our two horses and sat down one on either side of a great flat rock. The Bart took a pack of cards out of his tunic, and I had only to see him shuffle to convince me that I had no novice to deal with. We cut and the deal fell to him.

My faith, it was a stake worth playing for. He wished to add a hundred gold pieces a game, but what was money when the fate of Colonel Etienne Gerard hung upon the cards? I felt as though all those who had reason to be interested in the game— my mother, my hussars, the Sixth Corps d'Armee, Ney, Massena, even the Emperor himself—were forming a ring round us in that desolate valley. Heavens, what a blow to one and all of them should the cards go against me! But I was confident, for my ecarte play was as famous as my swordsmanship, and save old Bouvet of the Hussars of Bercheny, who won seventy-six out of one hundred and fifty games off me, I have always had the best of a series.

The first game I won right off, though I must confess that the cards were with me, and that my adversary could have done no more. In the second, I never played better and saved a trick by a finesse, but the Bart voled me once, marked the king, and ran out in the second hand. My faith, we were so excited that he laid his helmet down beside him and I my busby.

"I'll lay my roan mare against your black horse," said he.

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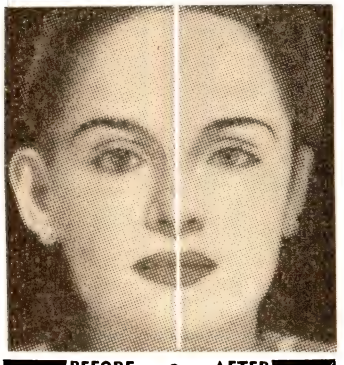

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"Done!" said I.

"Sword against sword."

"Done!" said I.

"Saddle, bridle and stirrups!" he cried.

"Done!" I shouted.

I had caught this spirit of sport from him. I would have laid my hussars against his dragoons had they been ours to pledge.

And then began the game of games. Oh, he played, this Englishman—he played in a way that was worthy of such a stake. But I, my friends, I was superb! Of the five which I had to make to win, I gained three on the first hand. The Bart bit his moustache and drummed his hands, while I already felt myself at the head of my dear little rascals. On the second, I turned the king, but lost two tricks — and my score was four to his two. When I saw my next hand I could not but give a cry of delight. "If I cannot gain my freedom on this," thought I, "I deserve to remain for ever in chains."

Give me the cards, landlord, and I will lay them out on the table for you.

Here was my hand: knave and ace of clubs, queen and knave of diamonds, and king of hearts. Clubs were trumps, mark you, and I had but one point between me and freedom. He knew it was the crisis, and he undid his tunic. I threw my dolman on the ground. He led the ten of spades. I took it with my ace of trumps. One point in my favour. The correct play was to clear the trumps, and I led the knave. Down came the queen upon it, and the game was equal. He led the eight of spades, and I could only discard my queen of diamonds. Then came the seven of spades, and the hair stood straight up on my head. We each threw down a king at the final. He had won two points, and my beautiful hand had been mastered by his inferior one. I could have rolled on the ground as I thought of it. They used to play very good ecarte at Watier's in the year '10. I say it—I, Brigadier Gerard.

The last game was now four all. This next hand must settle it one way or the other. He undid his sash, and I put away my sword belt. He was cool, this Englishman, and I tried to be so also, but the perspiration would trickle into my eyes. The deal lay with him, and I may confess to you, my friends, that my hands shook so that I could hardly pick my cards from the rock. But when I raised them, what was the first thing that my eyes rested upon? It was the king, the king, the glorious king of trumps! My mouth was open to declare it when the words were frozen upon my lips by the appearance of my comrade.

He held his cards in his hand, but his jaw had fallen, and his eyes were staring over my shoulder with the most dreadful expression of consternation and surprise. I whisked round, and I was myself amazed at what I saw.

Three men were standing quite close to us — fifteen metres at the farthest. The middle one was of a good height, and yet not too tall—about the same height, in fact, that I am myself. He was clad in a dark uniform with a small cocked hat, and some sort of white plume upon the side. But I had little thought of his dress. It was his face, his gaunt cheeks, his beak-like nose, his masterful blue eyes, his thin, firm slit of a mouth which made one feel that this was a wonderful man, a man of a million. His brows were tied into a knot, and he cast such a glance at my poor Bart from under them that one by one the cards came fluttering down from his nerveless fingers. Of the two other men, one, who had a face as brown and hard as though it had been carved out of old oak, wore a bright red coat, while the other, a fine portly man with bushy side-whiskers, was in a blue jacket with gold facings. Some little distance behind, three orderlies were holding as many horses, and an escort of dragoons was waiting in the rear.

"Heh, Crauford, what the deuce is this?" asked the thin man.

"D'you hear, sir?" cried the man with the red coat. "Lord Wellington wants to know what this means."

My poor Bart broke into an account of all that had occurred, but that rock-face never softened for an instant.

"Pretty fine, 'pon my word, General Crauford," he broke in. "The discipline of this force must be maintained, sir. Report yourself at headquarters as a prisoner."

It was dreadful to me to see the Bart mount his horse and ride off with hanging head. I could not endure it. I threw myself before this English general. I pleaded with him for my friend; I told him how I, Colonel Gerard, would witness what a dashing young officer he was. Ah, my eloquence might have melted the hardest heart; I brought tears to my own eyes, but none to his. My voice broke, and I could say no more.

"What weight do you put on your mules, sir, in the French service?" he asked. Yes, that was all this phlegmatic Englishman had to answer to these burning words of mine. That was his reply to what would have made a Frenchman weep upon my shoulder.

"What weight on a mule?" asked the man with the red coat.

"Two hundred and ten pounds," said I.

"Then you load them deucedly badly," said Lord Wellington. "Remove the prisoner to the rear."

His dragoons closed in upon me, and I—I was driven mad, as I thought that the game had been in my hands, and that I ought at that moment to be a free man. I held the cards in front of the General.

"See, my lord!" I cried; "I played for my freedom and I won, for, as you percieve, I hold the king."

For the first time a slight smile softened his gaunt face.

"On the contrary," said he, as he mounted his horse, "it is I who won, for, as you percieve, my King holds you." ●

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But, suddenly—in the past few months, I think— we have begun to use alibi for any excuse, plea, defence, means of escape or justification. A boxer called Max Baer, after losing a boxing match, whispered to the microphone, "I have no alibi" (which could only mean that he did not intend to show that he was not present at the fight). A journalist tells us that when our cricketers returned from Australia "they offered no alibis." And if the journalist may do it I suppose the boxer may do it.

—From "What a Word," by A. P. Herbert. Published by Methuen.

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Father Christmas Galore

(Continued from page 23)

ground was crowded with cars, trucks and utilities and the party was already in progress. Steve could hear the kids singing *"God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen"* under Rev. Morris' leadership. Steve testifies he hummed a bar or two himself, picturing Helen at the piano. He thought it was a night for peace on earth and goodwill among men, especially Helen's goodwill towards Steve McCracken.

"To save us all from Satan's pow'r when we had gone astray," he sang. Nothing illegal in that, sir, though his voice was somewhat hollow-ground by singing to cattle on night camps.

He put on the Santa Claus headgear and stood in a patch of moonlight and tried to look at himself. Already he had a waterfall of sweat down his back, but it was all in a good cause. He knew his big nose would give him away to the grown-ups, but he reckoned nobody would throw Father Steve McCracken Christmas out the door.

"'Fear not then,' said the Angel, 'let nothing you affright'," carolled Steve as he slung the sack of toys over his shoulder and set off for the school.

DESPITE the Angel's assurance, sir, Steve was affrighted in less than thirty seconds. As he moved from the trees, a harsh exclamation made him swing around and then freeze. Emerging from the trees some distance away was another Father Christmas who was as complete in every detail, including bulging sack over the shoulder, as Steve himself.

As reported to me by both Father Christmases, sir, it was a dramatic meeting. They strode towards each other and glared into each other's face. Steve recognised Joker Lacey's tremendous hands and feet. Joker recognised Steve's outsize nose.

"Who," demanded Steve, "said *you* could be Father Christmas?"

"Who said *you* could?" retorted Joker.

Steve shoved his white beard into Joker's white beard and howled, "I've had you, Lacey. Can't a man give the kids a bit of pleasure without you pushing your ugly mug in? Can't he? Get to hell out of here."

Joker pushed his red tunic against Steve's red tunic and snarled, "McCracken, *I'm* Holt's Springs' Father Christmas and if you think you're going to butt in, you're coming the gutser of your life. Scram while the going's good."

"*You* Father Christmas!" raved Steve. "You're the rottenest Father Christmas I ever saw. Any fool will know you're a fake. Me, I look like Father Christmas and the kids'll reckon I *am* Father Christmas."

"Not after they lamp the gimcrack stuff you got for 'em," sneered Joker.

"Look here," roared Steve, patting the bag on his shoulder. "There's just on three hundred quids' worth in there, Joker."

"Funny," said Joker. "Just a dollar under my lot."

"You meaning anything, Lacey?"

"Take it anyhow you like, McCracken."

Steve placed his sack on the ground with due regard for its contents. Joker put his sack down, also acting with care. They faced each other assuming, I admit, sir, pugilistic attitudes.

Then they took a little thought. Each considered he could belt the other into the ground, but, after all, they realised it wouldn't appeal to children, parents and teacher for Father Christmas to land in the school with his costume torn off, particularly as, because of the hot night, there was nothing under the costume.

"See here, Joker," said Steve. "I wouldn't hurt your feelings for anything, for you're not a bad bloke. Not really. But the truth is Helen asked me to be Father Christmas. So, Joker, just fade quietly away and forget all about being Father Christmas. It's too big a job for you to handle."

Joker spat on his hands.

"That's big of you McCracken," he grated. "Yes, sir. Funny thing, though, that's just what Helen said to *me*. But Helen's not the girl to have *two* Father Christmases gumming up the works. So who's the liar, McCracken? You or Helen?"

You'll realise, sir, there was only one answer to this question, but before Steve could take a swing at Joker, a new voice chimed in.

"Both of youse is liars," said this voice. "*I'm* Father Christmas t'night."

Wheeling like one man, Steve and Joker uttered cries of grief and pain. There stood a third Father Christmas, whose black, terrific eyebrows identified him as Hank Gorman.

"Yair," Hank went on like a mad dingo trying to be dignified. "Youse liars shove off an' let the bloke what knows the job git on with it. Me, Helen's bin training me f'r weeks. *'Ah, there, little Willie Tozer. I hast hath pretty reports o' thee an' here art the dinkus an' geefoozalum ye hath asketh for.' 'Whacko, Patty Menarby, thine ol' Daddy Exmas bringeth thee this beaut fakus f'r neverest tellin' one flamin' lie all the year.'* Yair," said Hank. "Helen's bin givin' me the right drill an' youse cows c'n chase y'rselves t' hell."

Sir, I need hardly say that Steve and Joker declined to chase themselves anywhere. They said Hank was a filthy liar. Hank responded with equal passion. There ensued a slanging match which escaped notice at the school only because the kids were then vociferously singing *"Good Christian Men, Rejoice."*

In the course of this debate, my name was mentioned. At first, the Father Christmases were inclined to be sore with me, but they eventually perceived I was in no way to blame for the confusion. When each had consulted me on the legality of his project, I promised to keep his scheme a secret. Sir, I kept those promises. I trust you will bear this fact in mind.

Finally, Hank grew tired of mere talk. He set off for the school at high speed. Steve and Joker scooped up their bags and bolted after him. They were allowing him no advantage in this crucial engagement.

SIR, in the school, the children, lined up on the platform, switched from *"Good Christian Men, Rejoice"* to *"The First Nowell."* A proper Christmas spirit prevailed although the room was crammed with sweating citizens, only a small percentage of whom had seats in or on the desks. The majority stood wherever their feet could fit in. Helen, at the piano, had people leaning on the instrument all around her, and there was just enough space for Rev. Morris to beat time without hitting anybody. Which was just as well, for Rev. Morris has a fist like an elephant's hoof. An overflow audience, all men, of whom I was one, filled the porch in order to take care of the iced beer. Some, including a number of natives interested in the white man's corroboree, watched through the open windows from the outside.

Among these last was Joey Barcoo, a very old blackfellow. His instinct for danger caused Joey Barcoo to turn around. When he saw the Father Christmases approaching the school, he thought the ancient devils of his tribe had got him at last. He gave a terrified yell and ran for the bush as he hadn't run for thirty years.

The red devils ignored Joey. They came galloping on, shoulder to shoulder, snarling at each other for kicking, tripping and elbowing. The keenest referee in the land couldn't have made their arrival at the porch anything but a dead-heat. Not even yourself, sir.

In the schoolroom, the kids were singing, *"Then entered*

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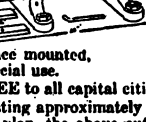

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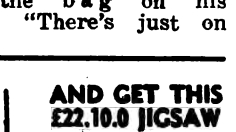

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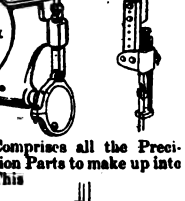

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in those Wise Men all three, very reverently upon bended knee." And the three Father Christmases reached the doorway together, tried to beat each other through, and stuck.

As you'll surmise, sir, "*The First Nowell*" died. All gazed at the struggle which resulted from the difficulties the Father Christmases had got themselves into. Steve had his left shoulder and sack hooked behind one door jamb. Joker was forced to straddle the opposite jamb as if riding a perpendicular horse. Hank in the middle was barred from progress by Steve's right arm and Joker's wrapped around his neck. All the same, Hank remembered why he was there and managed to address a few words to the gathering.

"Hi, people!" he called in strangled tones. "Thou seest the one an' only Father Christmas what hath—*let me go, y' swine!*—what hath hasteth with jingle bells bearin' tidin's o' cheer—*f'r hell's sake!*"

His opponents clamped on his throat and his oration ceased. He began to kick and buck and heave like a roped buffalo, causing proceedings to become somewhat excited. The kids, thinking this a show for their entertainment, were delighted, but W. Tozer and the Mothers' Club made an indignant uproar. I gathered, sir, they were calling on me to arrest the Father Christmases. I couldn't see why.

HOWEVER, it was necessary to save the door from damage, so I organised a squad of men in the porch to push the Father Christmases into the room. At the same time, W. Tozer, inside the room, organised a party to push them *out*. I knew nothing of this, sir, until my team, being more numerous, had gained the victory. It was unfortunate that in the course of these exercises W. Tozer fell to the floor and was trampled on severely before his plight was noticed.

He got to his feet in an altogether unnecessary rage.

"I'm not having these lunatics in the place," he yelled. "They got to go. Come on, throw 'em out."

The children groaned, though some of their mothers applauded. It was lucky we had Rev. Morris there to speak words of peace.

"Just a moment, Bill," he said to W. Tozer. "They're in now, so I suppose we'd better think of the kids."

"Yair, but three of 'em!" barked W. Tozer. "The kids won't believe in *three* Father Christmases."

Which is where he was wrong, sir. The kids believed in the Father Christmases all right. They were all around them, pulling at the sacks and guessing at the contents and staking claims to all sorts of things from talking dolls to .22 repeaters and model planes. Their childlike trust couldn't be mistaken.

Hank pulled his beard straight and said, "Just a moment, kids. There's only one Father Christmas here. Me, I'm him. The others are dirty dogs tryin' t' ruin y'r Christmas shivoo."

Naturally, sir, Steve and Joker exploded into contradictions.

"Taketh no notice of 'em," said Hank to the children. "They art gory liars, kids. Cometh t' me an' gettest thou thine own presents herewith."

"A man who can't talk English is no Father Christmas," roared Steve. "Me——"

"Wait on, kids," cut in Joker. "Don't you be fooled. I'm Father Christmas and I'll prove it. Just you watch me."

What does he do, sir, but shove through the throng to Helen, still sitting at the piano but looking, I've got to allow, as though tangled up with a mob of snakes.

"Helen—I mean, Miss Forrest," said Joker. "Just tell 'em the truth. Just tell 'em I'm Father Christmas and we'll get on with the——"

Steve shouldered his way to the piano and broke in, "I'm the man you picked for the job, aren't I, Helen? Didn't——"

Then Hank bullocked through the crowd, protested *his* claim and called on Helen to support it. The argument between the three reached eloquent heights. It was at this stage, sir, the first suggestion of riotous disturbance occurred. It came from no less a person than W. Tozer, J.P., who bellowed his intention of dealing with the Father Christmases one at a time or altogether, it made no difference to him. I was standing by, narrowly watching him for trouble, when members of the Mothers' Club again called on me to arrest the Father Christmases.

I asked what for.

They said for disturbing the peace.

Rev. Morris again stepped into the picture, breathing a Yuletide spirit. "Quiet, please, gentlemen," he said to W. Tozer and the Father Christmases. "Let's not lose our heads. A soft answer turneth away wrath. A little quiet discussion will iron everything out satisfactorily. And, by thunder, if we don't have quiet discussion, then——"

Judging by the rest of his remarks, Rev. Morris would tear them all in pieces and throw the bits out the windows.

"If you're not careful, padre," I advised, "I'll have to arrest *you* for threatening language."

Once more the Mothers' Club voiced their determination to force my resignation from the Police Force. Quite unjustifiably, sir.

"We're going to settle this matter one way or the other, Dave," said Rev. Morris, very red in the face. "I don't like being made a fool of."

"Of course, we'll settle it," I said. "And right now. Let the Father Christmases distribute their gifts. All in favour say, 'Aye'."

Sir, it is possible there were dissidents. In fact, I fell sure W. Tozer, the Mothers' Club and even Helen raised their voices in negation, but such a shout of affirmation went up from the kids there was no doubt the motion was carried.

A fresh difficulty immediately arose, for each of the Father Christmases wanted to be first. I dealt firmly with this problem. I got out a penny and when I'd finished tossing the order of precedence was Steve, Hank and Joker. Steve joyfully got to work, while Joker and Hank stood back, looking as contemptuous as their beards would let them. Steve started in silence but finished in uproar, for his toys were mostly of the noise-producing type, and the kids wasted no time in puffing, blowing or beating.

Steve caused a sensation with his final gift, a genuine marcasite pendant. He gave this to Helen, first, however,

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reading aloud the inscription on the card that went with it: "*To the most wonderful girl in the world from Steve. P.S.—A Merry Christmas.*" There was a ring of pride in his voice, and no wonder; that pendant had set him back the price of ten prime beef steers.

Helen blushed, the kids cheered, some parents applauded, others booed. Steve smirked under his beard and gave Hank and Joker a pitying glance. Neither of *them* would think of a marcasite pendant.

In this, sir, Steve was dead on the beam. Hank and Joker's presents for the kids were of the same ear-smashing kind as Steve's, but Hank's Christmas box for Helen was a gold wristlet watch carrying the message, "*To beautiful Helen with love and best wishes from Hank,*" while from Joker came a set of platinum ear-rings attached to the greeting, "*To the light of my life. 'Tis dark without, you, Joker.*"

Sir, the noise was now cataclysmal. Every kid had at least three excruciating row-making instruments all being used to capacity. W. Tozer and his allies freely criticised the Father Christmases and/or their gifts to Helen and the kids according to their humour. They also criticised me. In the middle of this bedlam, Helen stood overwhelmed with stupefaction while the Father Christmases, once more on equal terms, argued their claims upon her attention.

Then, sir, came a sudden hush broken almost at once by a yell from the kids. The reason was the arrival of a *fourth* Father Christmas, this time a man of extraordinary size. I looked around and discovered that Rev. Morris was no longer to be seen. I think everybody else made the same discovery, except perhaps the young bubs.

"Good Gawd! Him, too!" said W. Tozer.

Father Rev. Morris Christmas stood in the doorway and said, "Hullo, everybody. At last I'm here. I thought I'd never make it. I've come a long way, kids."

Then his eyes lighted on his predecessors and he gave a start as if seeing them for the first time.

"What!" he roared, striding towards them. "You men here! I told you I was doing Holt's Springs myself. Isn't it possible to get obedience from deputies? You," he poked Hank in the chest, "should be in Jericho. And you," flipping Steve's nose, "are supposed to be in Hong Kong. As for you," pulling Joker's beard down and letting it snap back on his chin, "Timbuktu's your place. And the sooner you get there, the better. Out of my sight, all of you. No, now you're here, you can stay and learn how the job should be done."

Sir, Rev. Morris is a parson and used to putting on an act. Still, it was a good display he gave, especially at the end when he lifted Helen's left hand and put a diamond ring on her fourth finger.

"To the teacher," he said, "from a very lucky man."

There was only one person in the room, besides Rev. Morris, who wasn't stunned—Helen herself. Then Rev. Morris picked up the pendant, ear-rings and gold watch and, holding them daintily, returned them to the donors.

"Take them back, boys," he said kindly. "There'll be other women teachers coming to Holt's Springs and you never know your luck. Just keep on trying."

Then Hank, Steve and Joker invited me to step outside. They also invited Rev. Morris. With us went all Holt's Springs' men, most of the kids and some of the women. It was unfortunate that W. Tozer, J.P., tripped over an empty beer bottle in the porch, fell on his face and was again trampled on, but surely he could have looked where he was going.

The three disappointed Father Christmases were under the impression I'd broken my promise not to reveal their plans. In this they were wrong, sir. All I'd done was to hint to Rev. Morris that, seeing there was no mention of Father Christmas on the programme, he ought to act as same.

But they wouldn't believe me when I corrected them. However, even then there was no riotous disturbance. Rev. Morris is a big man and he is a muscular Christian. After a punch or two, Hank, Steve and Joker decided to go home quietly and there was no call for me to intervene.

Consequently, sir, you will see that the allegations made by W. Tozer, J.P., and the Mothers' Club are completely unworthy of notice. For corroboration of this report, I refer you to Rev. Morris and Miss Forrest—rather, Mrs. Rev. Morris, for, as I write, they are flying south to be married.

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"DRAU!" he called urgently. "Drau!" There was no answer, no naked pattering of feet from the dim, mysterious region behind the bungalow.

He was alone; and in these days it was not good to be alone — especially at night when the lurking darkness was linked with memories and something more frightening than any dream.

"Don't answer, damn you!" he shouted. "I know. He's over at the village. Drinking with his friends. He had a swift picture of Drau's smooth, little-boy face wrinkling into laughter. "I'll give him laughter — tear the hide off him!"

But he knew he wouldn't. He had no hold over Drau. The young Malay was an unchained monkey, likely to make a chattering leap and be seen no more.

His cheerful insolence was more bearable than being left alone in the bungalow waiting. . . .

Waiting. For what?

For nerves to disintegrate. For the ghosts of Schrooner and Cornelius to materialise from the veiled jungle.

Yet if he could escape, furtively on tip-toe, so that the watching ghosts of Schrooner and Cornelius would not hear. . . . If he could find the strength to walk through fear and out the other side of it. . . .

"I'd be free," he whispered.

The hollow impulse took him through to the passage and out on the verandah. Light and darkness. The moon low over the trees, large and brilliant. The trees black, a congealed blackness which suggested an impenetrable barrier. Across the river, there was the red glimmer of a fire from the Malay village.

Now was the moment. Quietly!

He went down the steps and his shadow appeared beside him on the flat, smooth earth. And then he stiffened and all the false warmth of the whisky went out of him, leaving him cold and clammy. There was a second shadow, gliding across towards where his own lay like a dead thing.

"You're Lester, I take it." A deep voice, confident and unhurried. Quickening now, into: "What the devil's the matter? You stare as if I'm a ghost!"

"N—no; it's nothing. Nothing. I thought you were Schrooner."

"Schrooner? Who the hell's Schrooner?"

"No—no. No. You wouldn't . . . Never mind." He was struggling desperately to master himself. "Yes, I'm Lester. What do you want with me?"

DARROW he said his name was. His dress was elegant for these parts. Lester felt shabby by contrast; but there was more to his sense of inferiority than this. Darrow had the poise which is the child of self-confidence.

Darrow raised his glass.

"Ah! This is good. I've had to walk the last four miles. Drove up the coast road; but at a fishing village —Kuala Tambak—I found the bridge down. We'll have to make the rope crossing to reach the car."

At first Lester didn't grasp the meaning. When he realised what was being suggested, even taken for granted, he shrank.

"No, no. I can't come in your car."

Darrow's left eyebrow was a dark question mark. "Really? My dear chap, I'm putting things the wrong way round. Forgive me; we'll come to it later. I think there's more whisky in the bottle. I'm sure Fryat won't mind."

"Fryat! You know Fryat?"

"Naturally," Darrow said smoothly. "We've been of service to one another. On and off, in the casual way. Out here we tend to remember people and faces; they don't get lost among the million, as they do back home."

Lester's fingers tightened over the arms of his chair. Wasn't that his own trouble—the faces he couldn't forget? And the haunting fear that the faces in turn had not forgotten him? But he couldn't talk of this, not of the dark secret and the black box of horrors hidden away in his brain.

"Did Fryat send you?"

"Not exactly. We were talking. He mentioned you. Told me that when you came out of hospital you were still a very sick man and wanted nothing more than to bury yourself."

Lester muttered defiantly: "I'm all right here. It suits me—just what I want. It's good of Fryat to let me use the place."

Darrow's eyebrows drew together.

"Are you sure of that?" he asked slowly. "Aren't you

carrying a bundle of fears on your shoulders? Leave them here; walk out on 'em."

Lester felt trapped.

He became aware of Darrow's low-pitched voice. Calm, soothingly calm. Yet at the same time mastering everything.

". . . it seemed a good thing to come and talk with you. To our mutual interest, I imagine. After all, Lester, you can't stay hermit for ever. It's not merely a matter of considering your own interests. There's Fryat. You didn't buy the bungalow from him, did you?"

Lester laughed at that. "Fryat told you I came out of hospital without a cent!" he exclaimed. "Fryat wants the bungalow?" And after it the quick accusation: "You fixed that, didn't you? Because of some service you did him. . . ."

"Naturally," said Darrow serenely. "Once I'd heard all about you, that is. I'm the last man in the world to start interfering; except where my interests require it."

"When you're ready," said Lester, "perhaps you'll explain. You didn't walk those four miles merely out of curiosity."

"Excellently put," Darrow murmured. "I'm not much good at telling a story, old chap. First, I must introduce Hulke. He's an Australian. Dear old Hulke! Has his limitations, of course, but find yourself in a tight spot with more danger than your appetite can stomach, and you'll breathe a little prayer to have Hulke around."

"And is Hulke with you? Back at the car?"

Darrow sighed. "Unfortunately, he isn't. I haven't set eyes on him for over three years. A rather bad three years. We'd been partners in several enterprises—profitable ones. It was a great pity events became too swift for us. It happened in the Dutch islands. No need to go into details. You can guess; you were there yourself, I understand."

Lester could feel himself cringing in the chair. "When —yes, I was there."

Darrow's voice continued, level and unhurried.

"An old hunting ground; but we shouldn't have gone back to it. We made the usual mistake; imagined the world was still the same, and that with the war over and the Japs cleared out things would be—well, just as they used to be.

"You know what happened. The surging wave of freedom, the East throwing off Western shackles. Inevitable, no doubt; but the violence of the change turned possible good into downright evil. . . . Let's get back to Hulke. Hell started to break loose and it was a matter of saving our skins. We were on one of the smaller islands and he was over the far side, where things were still primitive and there were no communications. I did my best for him before taking a leap to safety. Sent a runner—a Chinese servant who had an old-fashioned sense of loyalty and so could be trusted to the last breath."

Lester was reminded of too many things. He was afraid the black box in the back of his mind would come open. Schrooner might walk again. Schrooner the unforgettable; the giant carved out of tallow; big-jowled, tumulus bellied, with lizard-skin curtains drooping over the eyes. And little Cornelius trotting after him, panting and sweating.

"What happened next?"

"That's just the point, my dear chap. Nothing happened. I made my leap and eventually arrived in Singapore. But did Hulke get my message? There was no news of him where I'd said we would meet. And still no news after three months of waiting. Perhaps you know the place? A hotel—so called—run by a Straits Chinaman named Hsieh Chen. The old scoundrel knows all the villainy that's being hatched in this quarter of the East. But even he knew nothing of Hulke. Hulke, in many ways, is a typical Australian. A good fellow—but cross him and you're up against the obstinacy of a mule. And the temper. I was sure he would enter Singapore by one of its back doors. There are several, you know. And Hsieh Chen knows all the doorkeepers." He smiled. "In case your curiosity extends, I'll add that *I* came by the front door. A passage in a trading schooner. Hulke, presumably, hadn't managed to come out. It was clear I must go back and try to rescue him. Much easier to say than do. Remember, I had lost practically everything, apart from my clothes and a little money. Not nearly enough money to persuade the skipper of even the smallest craft to make the voyage. No one was prepared to lie off any of those shores and wait the necessary eight or nine days. It might have been possible, had I a talking amount of money. So, as a preliminary I had to get the cash. Have you tried to do that in this post-war East?"

"I was in hospital a long time. Since then, I've been here. But for Fryat I don't know what would have happened to me. I owe him a lot."

"A great man for a debt of honour, Fryat. It was a long time ago that your father helped him; he could well have forgotten it—most people would have done. By the way, he's still very concerned about you. He thinks my proposition the best thing that could happen for you."

"I still don't know your proposition," Lester murmured.

"It's simple enough. I've the money now, and I can fix up the passage. I've the Malays laid on for a small expedition. I need another white man. Why shouldn't you come?"

Lester laughed derisively. "Me! What use would I be? Haven't you reminded me of the fears on my shoulder? Can't you see for yourself that I'm broken? You claim to know men . . ."

"Exactly," Darrow said quietly. "Which is why I ask you. You can't bury yourself for ever, my dear chap. You'll have to come out of it sometime. Why not now?"

For a minute or so Lester was quiet in the gloom of thought. He knew Darrow was talking sense. It was the first sense he had heard for a long time, because his own brain was too overwrought, too occupied with fears, to provide advice.

He spoke, harshly. "A doctor might say that. But you're no doctor. You're a . . ."

"A realist." Darrow finished it for him. "As you are now, my dear chap, you're none too useful—even to yourself. That's a risk I must run. I learned some of your past from Fryat — oh, there were gaps. Pretty big gaps. The man who has no gaps in his life is a dull dog."

"All that," Lester said slowly, "was a long time ago."

Darrow ignored him. "Mind you — I'll be truthful — I wouldn't take the gamble but for other circumstances. First, you know the type of country. Somehow you came out of it. Perhaps the way you managed it is cloudy in your mind. But what you did once you could do again."

"I doubt it," Lester insisted. "I must have been in the grip of fever most of the time. Do you think I haven't tried to remember?"

Darrow was smooth, unhurried, in no way impressed. "The second consideration is that it's not easy to get hold of white men nowadays. And, my dear chap, I can't offer very good pay. A prospect, yes; provided everything comes off. But I've sunk my last penny in this venture."

"Isn't it a hopeless one? How can you expect to find this man Hulke? Did he get your message? If so, did he fail to come out? There were roving bands all over the place, and they were killing foreigners on sight."

Darrow shook his head. "I know Hulke. True, the devil's own luck may forsake a fellow. Well, even without his luck Hulke's a tough proposition. But I've a better reason. This island we were on. . . . I've told you the far side was a wild place. We'd done a bit of exploring and discovered a natural hide-out. From the landward side it could only be reached by a cleft through the hills.

"It seemed to us, even then, that it might be a useful spot, and Hulke went twice with supplies. I've said events were too quick for us; but we hadn't been completely blind. I believe my message reached Hulke; that he started back, found the going too dangerous, and made for the place beyond the hills. There's confirmation—of a sort. I'm not the kind of fool who commits his last cent on a theory. Naturally, I've made discreet inquiries. As soon as conditions settled down I tried to contact Indonesian friends. A few weeks ago I learned something interesting. From a chap who'd been tax-collecting on this island. His route to the more outlying villages took him along the range of hills. He reported them as impenetrable. It looked, he said, as though there'd once been a way through. But some sort of landslide had filled it."

"Doesn't that suggest the hopelessness . . ." Lester began.

"Not a bit," Darrow declared. "It suggests something very different. Among the supplies Hulke took in was a quantity of high explosive."

Lester sensed this was a losing battle. He was no match for Darrow, and each objection was smoothed out, like a crease in material under a hot iron.

"Suppose this report is right. What does it prove? That if Hulke's still alive you can't reach him. Unless you can find some desperate way over the hills, which may well take months. Do you know those hills? You have to fight every inch of the way, against living barbed-wire, slashing and chopping, exhausting

yourself to penetrate a few yards. Then you come to sheer, unassailable cliff."

Darrow, pouring himself another drink with a perfectly steady hand, smiled and raised an eyebrow. "So you see, my dear chap," he said softly, "you *do* know the country and what one would be up against. I give you your point about the hill range; it would take, as you say, months. Funds wouldn't permit that. Fortunately, there's another way—the way from the sea."

"You claimed it was a hide-out. And yet it can be reached easily from the coast?"

"Not easily. I believe it can be done, and it *must* be done. There's a river. We were going to explore further; but all the surveying I managed was to take rough bearings from a point in the hills. But, my dear chap, you wrong the hide-out. Imagine it! On the landward side, the impenetrable hills. And seawards — a thick mangrove *swamp*. I think we should get through in four days — perhaps less. It depends on finding the river."

DARROW took hospitality for granted. But Lester was thankful the evening didn't drag on. Now he lay on his bed and sleep had never seemed more distant.

At first he thought about Darrow and his fantastic proposition, thought about it and was conscious of his own weakness and impotence. He cringed from the idea of going back into the world. This was the most frightening thing which had happened to him for months. Even more frightening than the dread of those lurking ghosts. Schrooner. Cornelius. . . .

He was back again on that plantation. The familiar journey of the restless, wakeful night hours. Back to that other night, when a shabby, battered car had driven up. . . .

IT was Hendricks, their nearest neighbour, whose plantation was some thirty miles away. Schrooner stepped down to greet him; Schrooner, the *Tuan Besar*, the big boss, the manager.

Hendricks was a shrivelled little man; Schrooner a mountain of a Dutchman, an ugly brute, slow in movement and sleepy-eyed.

Hendricks chattered like a frightened monkey and, as he came under the glare of the hanging lamp, Lester could see that his face was twitching nervously. Schrooner never showed much emotion; but for once his eyes were alert and he was watching Hendricks closely. Then his great voice boomed out: "So it's that way, is it? We'll consider what's to be done."

"Done!" Hendricks chattered. "There's only one thing. Clear out! Make a dash for it!"

Lester came out of his chair at that. Schrooner saw, and gave his ugly grin. He didn't forget the joke which had worn thin — calling the new assistant Singkeh, the freshman, the greenhorn. "Singkeh," he said, "I hope you're a good runner. If ever you needed your legs it's now."

"What's wrong?" Lester demanded.

It was Hendricks who answered, clutching nervously at Lester's arm, pouring out agitated words.

For weeks there had been rumours of unrest, of some independence movement aiming to wrest all control from the Dutch. On the plantation, which was in a remote part of the island, it had all seemed vague and distant. Schrooner had talked of it a bit, grumbling at the folly of the company which had pulled wires and used influence in the hope of starting the plantations up again. And Schrooner had said: "Always their minds on a quick return for their capital. As for this political activity—nowadays every fool with a bit of education imagines he's a politician. Hot air's all right for people with nothing to do."

But, listening to Hendricks, it was clear to Lester that there was something far more dangerous than hot air. He had heard of the *pemoedas*, supposed to be gallant men dedicated to the ideals of freedom but in actuality a ruffianly, undisciplined pack of terrorists, responsible to nobody. And there had been wild stories, rumour run riot. . . .

Hendricks, though, was not bringing rumour. This was the real thing, grim and horrifying. *Pemoedas* were in the area. Already they had attacked a plantation and a store, butchering the whites.

"There was a woman and a small child!" Hendricks cried. "And the worst of it . . ."

Lester was spared the rest, for Schrooner returned. And Cornelius trotted out bearing a big tray with bottles and glasses. Cornelius was softly plump and he had a circular bald patch which gave him a priestly appearance.

"Serve drinks, Cornelius," Schrooner ordered. He lowered himself into his special chair, which creaked under his weight. "Well, Hendricks, my friend, this is serious, ja? We must consider what to do."

Hendricks was irritable. "You've said that before. If you think I've come over here to waste the night talking. . . . I'm picking up my assistant and we're making for the coast."

The big Dutchman was grinning. "Let's hear from Singkeh first. Youth has so much more fire. Eh, Cornelius?"

The heavy humour was stale to Lester. He said: "It seems the *pemoedas* aren't in strength, and I imagine they're a cowardly bunch. Cutthroats usually are. If Mr. Hendricks and his assistant join us here, there'll be five of us. Five determined men with guns. . . ."

Hendricks threw up his hands. "The mad *Inglis!*" he exclaimed.

Schrooner passed drinks. Then he grunted: "Something to be said for it. But they could surround us and keep us here. Starve us out. There's too much cover for snipers."

They argued a little; but Lester wasn't listening. He had suddenly thought of Dr. Merdeka — the man with the friendly smile, the boyishly smooth face. Merdeka was often at the plantation. Schrooner, on behalf of the company, paid him a fee for medical attention to the labourers. Twice a week, Merdeka arrived with medical equipment. It had become a custom, when his work was done, for him to seek out Lester. Merdeka's English was good and he was an interesting talker.

"What about Merdeka? He knows the country and he's not without influence. If we could get word to him he'd lose no time coming to our assistance."

Schrooner nodded. "Maybe you've got something there. He's your special pal. Know where he is?"

"Up in the hills somewhere," Lester said. "An outbreak of sickness in one of the villages."

"If he's away in the hills," Hendricks objected, "it might take days to get word to him. No! If you could bring him here to-night. . . ."

"That's impossible," said Schrooner impatiently. "If I sent a messenger to-night . . ." He shrugged his great shoulders wearily. "Who could I send? No native. . . ." Then he chuckled. "I'm damned sure I'm not going myself. You see how it is, Hendricks. We could send word to Merdeka to-morrow. While you go back for your assistant we can make a start on turning this into a strong post. We might bring in a few of the more reliable workers. Extra guns at an increased cost in food and water. I don't know. We may have to hold out a few days. . . ."

Hendricks kicked his chair back. His feet clattered noisily on the planks of the verandah. "Hold out — for what? Do you think troops will come to the rescue? I tell you—the whole *verdoemd* thing's going up in blood and fire! I've done my part; I've warned you. Now I'm going. Making a dash for it. If you care to sit here and have your throats cut. . . ."

He ran down the steps and jumped into his car. Lester listened to the engine spluttering into life, and finally saw darkness swallow up the twinkling red tail-light.

"So we stay," said Cornelius.

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Schrooner knocked his hand away. "*Domkop!* Singkeh's idea is crazy. What else would you expect from an Englishman? No, Hendricks is right; but he's doing it the wrong way. He's never learnt how to think. What's the first thing the *pemoedas* will do? Watch the roads. Mark my words, Hendricks will run slap into an ambush."

Lester stared. "Then why didn't you warn him?"

"I know better than to waste my breath," Schrooner answered. "He's a stubborn ox. Now I'll tell you something. Why did he come here? Just to find out what we're going to do. Did you notice how quickly he cleared off? Oh! he's well satisfied. It suits him splendidly. If we stay here we hold up the *pemoedas*. Give him more time to reach the coast."

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Cornelius said happily: "So we go. Splendid. I'll get the car."

Schrooner snapped: "You're a blasted fool. We We pack a few things and slip out along the plantation path. When we come to the village near the stands of new trees, we plunge into jungle. There's a narrow trail. I go shooting that way. It leads due west. Now . . ."

Listening to him, Lester realised how he'd misjudged the man's hesitancy. It had been an act behind which a careful plan had been worked out for reaching the coast without using the roads. But, while admitting that the big Dutchman knew the country, the scheme didn't appeal to him. There was no knowing where the *pemoedas* might be encamped. They, too, were accustomed to moving through jungle.

He said so; but Schrooner ignored the objection.

Cornelius shuffled to his feet. "I'll start packing," he announced.

Lester said: "I'm not happy about this. We should warn the workers. They must go back to their villages."

"They must look out for themselves," Schrooner said. "After all, it's their country. Anyway, they're too scattered for any warning to be possible before dawn."

Lester recognised these things; but there was no escape from a feeling of responsibility.

"I suggest mustering them at daybreak," he said. "After that, we should find Merdeka. He'll probably know where the *pemoedas* are grouped. There's a possibility he's heard the news and is on his way to warn us."

"Something in it," Schrooner muttered. Then: "No, you're too optimistic. What happens if we're attacked to-night? How do we know that Merdeka *will* return? I'm not denying he might try it—for your sake. But suppose he can't get through?"

Lester moistened his lips. His hands tightened on the bamboo arms of his chair. His belief in Merdeka and his sense of responsibility fought against the idea of flight. And the words were out before he really intended to say them.

"I don't like this business of running away. Suppose nothing happens? We've abandoned the plantation. Why? Because somebody told us . . ."

Cornelius, who had emerged from the bungalow with two packs and three rifles, turned a puzzled face. Then he smiled sourly. "Don't listen to him, Schrooner. It's all very well for him to talk. He isn't Dutch. He's safe anyway. Oh! His advice is good —for himself!" He stopped, a little frightened at having been unusually outspoken.

Schrooner laughed. "You're a fool, Cornelius! Singkeh's like the rest of his race. You think they're up to tricks and rack your brains to find the hidden motive. And there never is one! It's their peculiar madness." He stood up. "Singkeh can stay behind if he wishes. We'll go all the faster without him. We're more used to jungle."

The words stung Lester. He wasn't going to be a drag on them. If that was the way they felt. . . .

Schrooner stepped across and took the third gun from him. He brought it back to the table and put it down solemnly. "You may need this, Singkeh. And your revolver. But if a few shots don't save you, remember to keep the last bullet for yourself." He chuckled. "Sure you won't change your mind?"

Coldly, Lester said: "I'm certain."

Cornelius, hovering, said uncomfortably: "Perhaps we'll meet again. Probably on the coast when Merkeda guides you to safety."

THE darkness curtained over them, and full realisation of being alone swept through Lester. The night dragged unbelievably, straining the nerves. At times his thoughts wandered towards the coast. He pictured Schrooner and Cornelius, struggling against the thorny tangle of the jungle. And Hendricks, at the wheel of the shabby old car, driving with desperate fear towards the coast. But for the most part he was straining his eyes and ears, being startled by every sound —and the night was crowded with furtive noise—until there was the hot ache of tiredness burning his vision, and his limbs were cramped.

At last there was an end to the devastating isolation of feeling himself the only man alive in a world of blackness. The stars faded. An incredibly green incandescence spread across the sky. He stretched, filling his lungs with the dawn air. Suddenly the fears of the recent hours vanished. All was peaceful. Nothing had happened. He half-expected to see Schrooner and Cornelius slink back, shame-faced. The thought of it made him smile; but his lips stiffened and he ran forward, his hands groping for the verandah rail.

A thick mass of smoke was puffing up, a great black mushroom against the clear sky. From the direction he knew that it was one of the long factory sheds afire. And there were shrill cries; but not of alarm. They were of triumph.

There were more smoke columns rising, swirling and curling lazily in the still air. The wild, exultant voices rose from all parts of the plantation. Lester was filled with a leaping rage against the workers. They were happy and excited because the *pemoedas* had brought them freedom. Couldn't they see it was their own living, their own future, which was being burnt before their eyes?

The Indian laburnums, which were the pride of plump little Cornelius, parted and Lester saw his first *pemoedas*. They were youths, clad in white and carrying carbines. There was no immediate hostility from them. They were smoking cigarettes and were laden with canned food, undoubtedly looted from one of the store buildings. All but two settled down for a meal. The two came to the bottom of the bungalow steps and posted themselves like sentries.

Lester's fears were declining. He recognised his position as precarious and expected some awkward moments. And then all apprehension vanished, for the bushes parted and a familiar figure came towards the bungalow. It was Dr. Merdeka, immaculate as always. His white trousers perfectly creased, his jacket spotless.

As he reached the bungalow steps the two sentries made a belated attempt to appear soldierly. Merdeka spoke, obviously ordering them away. One turned, willingly; the other objected, repeating the significant tapping of his carbine.

Lester, leaning forward to watch, had an astonishing glimpse of an unexpected Merkeda. The doctor snapped an order and at the same moment, with a swift movement, slapped the man across the face. Some of the *pemoedas* who had seen what happened laughed and called out jeeringly. They reminded Lester of a baboon troop.

Merdeka came lightly up the steps. His brown eyes were warm and friendly. There was nothing in his smooth, unwrinkled face to suggest the anger of a second ago. He grasped Lester's hand and said, in his curiously soft English: "My friend! I

am most thankful I came in time."

Lester laughed. "Not half so thankful as I am myself. I wasn't feeling very comfortable. A pity you weren't here half an hour earlier. You could have prevented some senseless destruction."

For a moment the doctor looked disconcerted, then his shoulders twitched. "A waste, I agree; but these youngsters have hot blood. It is easy for you to criticise. In your country you've had freedom for so long you've forgotten the bitterness which went into the winning of it. Your ancient buildings have a peace and mellowness which hides the burnings and the killings."

Lester remembered that Merkeda had finished his education in England; he remembered, also, that more than once the dapper little doctor had easily had the best in a friendly argument. He murmured: "Perhaps you're right."

Merdeka smiled. "You look tired. We'll sit down and talk. I walked most of the night. News reached me at the hill village and I realised time was important."

Lester said: "I told Schrooner you'd come. . . ."

Merdeka interrupted: "What's happened to him? And to Cornelius?"

"They left last night."

Merdeka studied his shoes, stooped to remove a patch of dirt and then said: "Was there any trouble here? What made them clear out?"

"Hendricks came over," Lester explained. "News had reached him and he warned us before driving to the coast."

Merdeka said, slowly and thoughtfully: "Ah, Hendricks. He ran into an ambush. His assistant was killed immediately. The car crashed; but Hendricks jumped out of the wreckage and started to run. It was only a matter of seconds before he was riddled with bullets."

A cold shiver went down Lester's spine. His reaction was increased by Merdeka's calm, impersonal voice. The coldness gave place to hot anger and he snapped: "A cowardly murder. It doesn't add much to the glory of fighting for liberty and independence."

Merdeka's head came round slowly. His eyes had changed. All the friendship had gone and they were those of a stranger. "You don't understand," he said quietly. "I've already reminded you of the many things your people have forgotten. You've *had* your violence. It's been buried for long years and you've been able to erect beautiful monuments over the savagery. You've toned down your history books. . . ."

Lester realised the folly of quarrelling. He was dependent on Merdeka for a safe journey to the coast. He tried hard to control his voice as he said: "Perhaps you're right. Anyway, none of it is my business."

Merdeka was friendly again and smiling. "You're wise, my friend. It is bad to interfere in these matters. We will forget Hendricks. So Schrooner and Cornelius knew of the danger. They fled; but you were left behind. How was that?"

"Choice," said Lester. "To begin with, I felt removed from this trouble. I'm not Dutch, and I'm not responsible for anything the Dutch may have done in the past. Even Cornelius thought I had little to fear. But bullets from an ambush don't discriminate. I imagined there was greater safety for me here. You see, I expected you."

Merdeka smiled. "Were there no other reasons?"

Lester shuffled a little. "I felt some responsibility. To the plantation, to the company." He laughed. "Even to the workers!"

Merdeka sat in silence for a minute. Then he said: "There's an English ship at the river mouth. She's unloading supplies; but has been delayed. Some difficulties with the local labour. There's unrest everywhere. . . ."

"And you'll help me reach the ship?"

"Naturally," Merdeka said. "Did Schrooner know of it, by the way?"

Lester was guarding his tongue, having realised that Merdeka was at least sympathetic towards the *pemoedas*. This attitude was helpful, inasmuch as the doctor was more likely to arrange a safe journey to the coast; but, on the other hand, there was a risk he might pass on to the human hunters any news of the escaping Dutchmen. But this last question was one he could answer freely and truthfully.

"He said nothing of a ship. Not in my hearing. Neither did Hendricks."

Merdeka nodded and leaned back in his chair. "Unlikely that they'd know," he said. "I only learnt it myself this morning—from those fellows out there." He nodded his head towards where the armed youths were resting after their meal. "I've heard nothing, though, of Schrooner. Was he ahead of Hendricks, do you think? I suppose he was escaping by road?"

Lester was uncomfortably aware of being watched closely. He said, as easily as he could: "I don't know. Hendricks left here in the car. Schrooner and Cornelius must have been on their way within half an hour. They didn't discuss their route with me. I'd the impression Schrooner wasn't sorry to be leaving me behind. He made some comment about travelling faster without me. . . ."

As soon as he'd said the words he understood that they were a slip. He was angry with himself for being oversure. And Merdeka hadn't missed the significance.

"Faster without you! That means he was taking to jungle. It has its amusing side, my friend. Schrooner, like an elephant. Followed by the fat mouse. So you watched them go?"

Lester felt a warm clamminess banding his forehead. He was no match for the little doctor.

"No, I didn't watch them go. It was dark, remember. Schrooner had warned me there might be a night attack, so I was in a hurry to fasten doors, put up some sort of a barricade."

"I'm glad the defences weren't necessary." Merdeka stood up as he spoke. "It would be wiser for you to stay here while I make the arrangements. Perhaps you'll pack the necessities while I'm seeing the *pemoeda* leader and persuading him to provide a small escort."

Lester breathed more freely. Packing was soon finished. Lester, whistling softly, picked up the two cases and went out on the verandah. A wall of sound moved towards him. He took a few steps and then stopped dead, still gripping the cases, staring in amazement at the space in front of the bungalow, at the assembled crowd. There were the plantation workers, and women and children from the nearest village. They were massed together, with the *pemoedas*, carbines much in evidence, keeping them in order. A dozen *pemoedas* were grouped at one side and with them was a man who was obviously their leader. He was middle-aged, with a pock-marked face and shifty eyes.

Merdeka was there also, obviously very much in command. He came briskly up the steps, followed by two *pemoedas*. He came very close to Lester and with a swift movement of a slender hand deftly removed the revolver from its holster.

"If you don't mind," he apologised. "I promise you shall have it back as soon as we are away from here."

Lester understood. He went down the steps with as much dignity as he could muster.

Glancing at the watching workers, Lester had swift impressions of sorrow and sym-

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pathy on some of the faces. But, for the most part, there was that crowd look which comes when individuality is submerged in an emotion-dominated mass.

Merdeka stopped as he came to where the women and children from the nearest village were gathered. At a signal from the little doctor one of the *pemoedas* keeping the crowd in order came forward, leading a little girl by the hand.

She smiled at Lester and he recognised her as the daughter of Osman, a foreman in charge of one of the tapping gangs.

Lester was about to speak to her when Merdeka swung round.

"Which way did Schrooner go?" he demanded. . . .

LESTER was taken completely by surprise, caught off his guard. His glance towards the bushes was instinctive. Then he was kicking himself for being tricked so easily. The gleam of triumph in Merdeka's eyes flicked him into rage; but not a blinding rage. He was able to see things clearly; the careful building up of a sense of security, the talk of an English ship at the river mouth, the friendliness, the concern. . . . It was all a carefully prepared trap into which he had fallen headlong.

Merdeka smiled, his face suddenly boyish in its jubilation. "You see, my friend, you didn't tell me *everything*. Now — let's have an end to foolishness. Which way. . . ?"

Lester contrived to control his voice so that he spoke quietly.

"Listen, Merdeka. You can't expect me to regard Schrooner's plans as important. Last night—as soon as it became clear that he was going and that I was remaining here —all my thoughts were centred upon myself. I'd rejected the idea of flight; my safety was in my own hands. Schrooner and Cornelius set off and I turned back into the bungalow. All I can tell you about them is that they went into the bushes over there. And it appeared, as you worked out for yourself, they were going to avoid the roads for fear of an ambush."

Merdeka said nothing. His hand slid to the bulging pocket and emerged holding the revolver he had confiscated.

Lester looked him straight in the face. "You can shoot me — or order one of your *pemoedas* to do it for you. But it won't help. I've told you everything now—and my dead tongue can't be more informative."

The closed expression was back on Merdeka's face. His voice was flat, impersonal. "There is much you forget. My education in your country, so that I understand you better than you understand me. I could throw you to these *pemoedas* and let them try ugly ways of persuasion. You'd bite through your tongue and die in agony, wouldn't you? Keeping your secret and your queer conception of honour. In death you'd be the victor. No, you're not cheating me that way. Here's my hostage. Are you going to sacrifice *her*?"

He pointed to Osman's daughter who was watching them, interested but puzzled because she couldn't understand a word they were saying.

The revulsion which went through Lester was like a physical sickness. Akin to the reaction of putting a bare foot on a snake unexpectedly in the darkness. Instinctively, he stepped forward. In Merdeka's hand the revolver twitched. At the same moment Lester's arms were seized by the guarding *pemoedas*.

Checked from physical action, Lester could only use words. "You — a doctor! Haven't you an oath — an honour of your own? Apart from that, this is between *us*. It's nothing to do with the child. You can't harm her."

Merdeka's face darkened and a vein throbbed in his temple. But he kept all emotion from his voice. "She is a pawn. It is of importance that I should know about Schrooner. There is the girl —and there are other hostages. You will speak the truth for their sakes. Now then— what were Schrooner's plans? Which way was he going?"

Suddenly Lester remembered something. It was Merdeka who had brought this child of Osman's into the world. And Merdeka *was* a doctor. This, then, was an elaborate psychological bluff.

He shook his head and said, slowly and deliberately: "I've told you. I don't know Schrooner's plans. He knew I wasn't going with him. Isn't it obvious he would take the precaution of keeping his route to himself? What I didn't know I couldn't betray."

"Is that your last word?" Merdeka's voice was little more than a whisper.

The doctor was no longer so sure of himself. Lester felt encouraged. His nerves were proving sufficiently strong to frustrate Merdeka's bluff. He said: "There's nothing else I can tell you."

Merdeka's movement was as swift as that of a striking snake. The tragedy happened before even a cry of protest could reach Lester's lips. His defiance broken, he stared in stunned horror. At the smoking revolver in Merdeka's hand. At the small, crumpled figure in the gaudy sarong. At a red stain seeping out and congealing in the hot dust. A woman screamed. There was a low, animal murmur from the crowd. A surge. The *pemoedas* jabbed carbine butts at a breaking, seething line. There were shrill cries, dull thudding blows.

Lester's shock gave way to fury. He tore himself loose and sprang at Merdeka. The revolver came up, but Lester grabbed the thin wrist and gave it a cruel jerk. Merdeka grunted with pain and the weapon fell. Lester's hands found a throat, his fingers dug into yielding flesh. He bent Merdeka backwards and had the wild satisfaction of seeing terror in the dark eyes.

"You filthy little savage!" he yelled. And then reason snapped. He forgot that Merdeka was the only one who could save him. He forgot everything except the desire to kill. He scarcely felt the blows rained at his face and body. Blows which became more feeble.

Merdeka's eyes were ghastly, bursting from their sockets in agony. His mouth was open as he choked for air. His tongue was out and frothing. Another minute. . . .

There was a sickening pain in Lester's back. And blackness. Total blackness. . . . Nothing. . . .

WHEN the darkness lifted, Lester found himself lying on the floor of a small hut. An instinctive movement brought a groan to his lips. A *pemoedas* sentry looked in at the door, his carbine threatening. His figure was only clear to Lester for a second, then it lost shape and was merged in the blackness which flooded the hut.

When Lester's eyes opened again he was more conscious. He tried to lift his head and was immediately giddy. This passed, and he realised he was not alone. Merdeka stood in the doorway, protected by *pemoedas*. There was satisfaction in seeing the heavy bandage at his throat, in hearing him speak in a tortured whisper.

"Do you tell me now, Lester? Or do we resume where we left off?"

Lester lowered his eyes. It was easier to look at the floor and the long shadows. He wanted to crawl away and bury himself in a shadow. Merdeka had won. It was impossible to defy the ruthlessness. So all that was left was betrayal. And, after that, shame and remorse.

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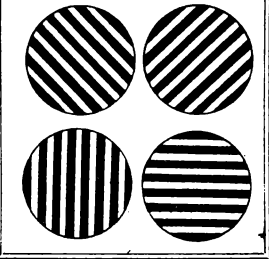

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And as Lester told Merdeka of the route which Schrooner intended to follow he was vividly remembering the other side of the big Dutchman's character. Not his wearisome teasing, his earthy jests. But his advice, patiently given; his clumsy attempts to make a new assistant feel at home; his generosity in permitting a *singkeh* to assume responsibilities in order to feel his feet the better.

What was Singkeh giving in return? Betrayal. Setting a ruthless pack of cut-throats after him. He imagined the big Dutchman running from the shrill, triumphant cries of the blood-lusting pursuers, his bulk crashing through undergrowth like a hunted elephant. He could even hear the shots which would bring him down.

When he had finished speaking, Merdeka looked at him steadily for a minute, and then wheezed: "You'll be kept here until I'm satisfied you've told the truth."

Lester made no answer. He wanted to throw a taunt, but his mind was too sluggish to think of enything effective. So Merdeka and his escort went away, leaving only a young *pemoeda* on guard.

The heat of the day increased and the hut became airless and oven-hot. Lester tried to sleep, but the pain in his back kept him awake. He lay there, tormented by his thoughts, blaming himself, hating himself. And out of all this there rose the one desire. He expected to be killed. If, when the time came, he could contrive to take Merdeka with him on that last journey. . . . If, during those last seconds of life, he could snatch a weapon. . . .

Outside the hut, the sentry gave a choking cough. Then there was a shadow in the doorway, black against the strong sunlight. And an urgent whispered voice: *"Tuan! Tuan!"*

Painfully, Lester raised himself on his elbows.

It was Osman!

As the man glided into the hut the light flashed on the steel of his knife. The point was dyed red. A crimson bead formed and dropped to the floor.

Lester spoke. "Osman! I understand why you're here. Let me say one thing. I didn't know. . . . I didn't believe. It was as ghastly to me as it was to you. I feel only that. . . . and grief. Now . . . I'm ready."

Osman knelt beside him. "No, *tuan*. You must escape. Quickly."

For a moment Lester stared, unbelieving. Then he shook his head. "No, Osman. If I escape there'll be more killing. If you would do something for me . . . leave me the knife. I will make them think I killed the sentry. And if I can plunge it into Merdeka's heart . . ."

"It is our vengeance, *tuan*," Osman insisted. "They will not seek you, because a charred body will be found in this hut. There will be other bodies. In their eagerness to catch the *Tuan Besar* they left very few men behind. And they . . ." He raised the knife significantly.

Saying this, Osman helped Lester to his feet, supporting him to the door. Outside, the body of the young *pemoeda* lay, already black with flies.

Lester, responding to an urgent touch on his shoulder, gripped Osman's hand and staggered weakly towards the bushes. The hut in which he had been imprisoned was at the rear of the bungalow and so had escaped the general burning of plantation buildings. There was only a short distance between it and a swampy hollow.

He tumbled down the slope and dropped to his knees beside a puddle of muddy water. He cupped some in his hands, so as not to disturb the slime, and damped his face.

He climbed the other side of the hollow, crossing as quickly as he could a patch which had been cleared for the planting of new trees. Beyond this was jungle. He was exhausted by the time he reached it. Tumbling through the thick bushes he lay flat.

HE struggled to his feet and plunged deeper into the green mass. His legs were unsteady, his head spinning. Many times he saved himself from falling by grasping the festoons of liana. The agony in his back, inflamed by every movement, was a burning which began to spread through his body. Each violent movement, such as when he tripped, made a groan tear its way through his clenched teeth. But he persisted, thrusting painfully against the thick undergrowth, staggering weakly across clearings. And, after an agony of time, he came to the road.

The road was empty. Lester rested before venturing across, ears and eyes alert. There was nothing. Just the hot, empty silence. So far, any novice could have followed his reeling trail. The road offered the opportunity of baffling pursuit. He stepped out warily and walked along it for a short distance, ready to dive into cover at the first alarm. Eventually, he found what he wanted — the low-hanging branch of a tree,

(Please turn to page 79)

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The Children of T'Kela

A "Sanders of the River" Story.

By FRANCIS GERARD

THE story of a party of explorers who hoodwinked an African tribe with their apparent control of an eclipse of the moon is just a novelist's invention, even though the novelist was Rider Haggard. Native folk have their own explanation of natural phenomena, and in the territories they would be surprised if you did not know that the moon was a bright hole in the sky. Similarly, it is widely known that every evening the sun creeps into a hole in the ground to sleep. If you should query this theory, they will reply that you can see the sun do it. For the whirlwind that sweeps ruinously, at certain seasons, through the Isisi and the N'Gombi, the People of the River have a name and an explanation. They call it M'shimba-M'shamba, and they will tell you dogmatically that he is a devil so high that no man can see to the top of him, that he is green in colour, that little clouds dart hither and thither about his head like birds, and that he is left-handed.

"Name but a few names, Tigini, the names of those who plotted against me!"

Such things are accepted and unquestioned, and Sanders never made any attempt to enlighten his people on these subjects, maintaining that, for all practical purposes, their explanations were just as good as ours. Only when propitiation, in the form of human sacrifice, was the order of the day did he interfere, and now the times were past when a young maiden, into whose moral antecedents the chief and wise women of the tribe had enquired in no uncertain manner, was tied in the path of M'shimba-M'shamba to avert his wrath.

The N'Gombi were very proud of M'shimba-M'shamba, and when he walked abroad in his terrible, haphazard course, they trembled in their huts, and their bellies were filled with pride at possessing so fearful a ghost as the Green One.

But proudest of all the Peoples of the River in this respect were the Ochori, for they possessed a devil who was so awful that he only manifested himself when in a rage, and his name was T'Kela-T'Kela.

T'Kela-T'Kela only came at certain times of the year, and the season when he made himself most felt and heard was the season of the big November storms; for this great devil of the Ochori was, in reality, nothing but a severe electric storm, and the fact that the northern plateau was his chief stamping-ground was due to the vast deposits of ironstone of which the

plateau was principally composed.

This fact was well known to the Commissioner and his people at Headquarters and also to Bosambo, for Bosambo had received the rudiments of education at a Catholic Mission School. Here the good Fathers unwittingly had taught him sufficient arithmetic to add two and two together and make them five when the deal was in his favour, but never more than the correct amount, with perhaps just a shade under, when it was the other fellow's turn.

But still Bosambo *was* superior in intellect to the average black man, and he knew all about T'Kela-T'Kela, and was not empressed when the storm-god came roaring and bellowing and slashing out right and left with his spears of lightning.

TO Bosambo, as he walked one evening through his city, came one M'Tando, who was a man the chief could trust.

"Bosambo," he said, after they had exchanged greetings, "I am your man, and this you know to be the truth, for did you not, with your own hands, pluck me from the water when one of the great ones would have taken me unkindly in his mouth?"

"This I did," nodded the chief. "And well do I know that you are my man. But why speak of this, for such things are understood between you and I?"

"Bosambo," replied M'Tando, "there is a bad palaver among your people, for they grumble at the great taxes they must pay to you beyond those which Sandi, in his cruelty, takes from them."

"Let there be no talk of cruelty, M'Tando," replied the chief. "For to steal men's goods is fine government, which is a mystery you cannot understand. As to the tribute I exact for myself, because you are my man, M'Tando, I will tell you that that, too, is good government."

M'Tando shook his head. "Lord chief," he said, "I am a simple fighting man, and do not understand these mysteries, yet I repeat your people grumble."

"Do they not always grumble?" asked Bosambo philosophically. "Now here is no new thing you tell me."

"Yet, Bosambo," went on the other eagerly, "here is a new thing, for when men grumble each in their own village they are as nothing, yet if they grumble together they make a great noise which all men must hear."

"Together?" asked Bosambo softly. "Now it seems to me that if there is a grumbling in this land, Tigini will be there."

Tigini was a small nothern headman of the Ochori who was a chronic malcontent and had been in the centre of every subversive propaganda since Bosambo had made himself chief.

IT was three nights later that a tall man, naked save for his girdle, strode rapidly along the river-path near Tigini's village, twirling a light throwing-spear in a practised hand. Arrived at the edge of the village, he squatted down in the shadow of a hut to wait with stoic patience for the time to pass. No man saw him come and no man saw him move out from his place of concealment when the village lay sleeping.

Unerringly he made his way to the hut where Tigini lay asleep, and leaving his spear stuck into the ground outside, entered.

"O Tigini," he whispered softly, "you shall come for a walk."

The next moment a big hand had taken the sleeping headman by the throat, stifling all outcry. Two minutes later a very frightened Tigini was hustled along the river-path by his captor and four unspeaking spearmen.

"Cry out and you die," said Bosambo, who had dragged his from his hut, and who was walking behind him with his spear lightly poised on three fingers.

Arrived at a certain place in the forest, far enough away from the village for a fire to be invisible, the little party halted.

"Now you shall make me a fire," said Bosambo to the four fighting-men from his guard.

"Bosambo," asked Tigini hoarsely, "what will you do?"

"Warm you at the fire of my hospitality, Tigini," replied Bosambo pleasantly, and the man's mouth went dry with fear.

When the first was burning merrily, Bosambo thrust the blade of his spear into its heart and left it there to heat. Tigini watched, the sweat pouring down his face, his eyes starting from his head.

"Tigini," said Bosambo, his voice kind and even, "it has always been a wonder to me why a man's skin should become wrinkled in a certain pretty manner when it has been burnt. Can you, in your wisdom, afford me an answer?"

Tigini had considerable difficulty in speaking at all.

"Master," he gasped, "it is a mystery to me also."

"Yet, it may well be, Tigini," went on Bosambo, idly turning the blade of the spear in the fire, "that we may solve this riddle to-night."

He drew the spear from the fire and spat upon the glowing blade. It hissed and sizzled.

"Not yet," he commented, shaking his head, and pushed it back into the fire, which was fed, from time to time, by his four warriors.

"It may well be," he went on, staring dreamily into the little flames which licked at the blazing metal, "that there will be other riddles to be resolved to-night, Tigini."

"Bosambo," replied the other hoarsely, "your words are twisted to my ears, and I do not understand."

"Be reassured, Tigini," nodded Bosambo. "You will understand."

"Is it," asked Tigini desperately, "is it the matter of Dala, the dancing-girl? For I swear to you, Bosambo, she has gone back to her father, and I have paid the fine which, in your wisdom, you had imposed."

The Ochori chief made no reply other than to jerk his head towards his prisoner. Immediately the four spearmen seized the terrified man and stretched him flat upon the ground and lashed his wrists and ankles to pegs which had been previously prepared.

"Bosambo," gasped Tigini, "I swear to you that I am loyal to you as my chief."

"Who spoke of loyalty, Tigini?" asked Bosambo, and drew the blade of his spear, which was now almost white-hot, from the fire. "Who spoke of loyalty, Tigini?" he repeated, squatting down beside the helpless man and poising that glowing spear-head above the unprotected stomach. "I did not speak of loyalty, Tigini. Yet since the word came unbidden to you, you shall speak further on this matter."

"Master," croaked the headman, his bulging eyes on that dreadful spear-head, which now swung gently, not two inches above his middle, "master, what would you?"

"Naught but a few names, Tigini," replied Bosambo; "the names of those who plot against my rule."

"Bosambo," groaned the other, "they will be very terrible in their anger if I speak."

"I, too, can be very terrible," nodded Bosambo, and moved the spear-head until it was just above the helpless man's face. "Their names, Tigini," he said.

"Tumkoro," shrieked Tigini, "Bellefari of the Inner Ochori, N'Guso of your own guard, R'Asali, chief of the fishing villages, and Ota, whose brother you slew."

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"None else?" queried Bosambo. "None else? For if you have lied to me, Tigini, by T'Kela-T'Kela the Terrible One you will be sorry. Go back to your village, Tigini, and recall always that Bosambo loves his people with a great love, for he is as a father to them all."

"I will recall," agreed Tigini, as he was freed, "that you are my chief and my *baba*."

"Go in peace, little child," said Bosambo, and as the man stumbled off, half sobbing, Bosambo hastened him on his way by just touching, but only just, a certain humble portion of his subject's anatomy with the hot tip of his spear.

"Chief," asked one of his spearmen, "was that wise? For will not the wife of Tigini ask how her lord was thus injured?"

"That is a palaver for Tigini," replied Bosambo. "Let us go home."

IN the ordinary way Bosambo never bothered to consult Sanders about matters affecting the rule of his people, nor as to what methods he should employ in enforcing that rule, but just recently there had been considerable trouble in the N'Gombi. The head of a mission up there, a most godly and excellent man, though quite ignorant of the secret of government as applied to the territories, had reported to the headquarters of his society in London what he described as a case of brutal injustice on the part of the ruling chief of the N'Gombi, and that, worse, the chief had been supported in his action by the Commissioner.

What had happened was that several husbands had come to the N'Gombi chief and brought conclusive evidence as to the nocturnal antics of a certain O'Furu, and satisfactorily proved that their connubial establishments were being seriously threatened by O'Furu's activities. Summoning O'Furu before him, the chief had questioned this black Lothario and, satisfied that O'Furu had obtruded himself where he had no business to be, ordered him to be flogged. This was done with complete satisfaction to all concerned save O'Furu, and since the culprit had recently become a convert of the missionary's, the latter was up in arms in defence of his black brother.

Nothing serious had come of the case, but, reading between the lines of a communication from Administration, Sanders saw there a promise of kicks to come, should there be any further cases of this kind reported.

Bosambo was well aware of this, as indeed were his people, and he hesitated, in this matter of the conspiracy, to apply his usual direct methods which had proved so satisfactory in the past.

"I will go to Sandi, Fatima," he said, addressing his wife, "and I will lay before him my problem, and Sandi will tell me that which it is best to do. For, light of my soul, Sandi loves me very truly, since we are related to one another, being brothers by a different mother."

"Lord," said his wife, "when you speak thus of our master, Sandi, to other people they, in their ignorance, think you a great one, but to me, who am your wife, you have no need to speak lies."

Bosambo looked hurt. "Fatima," he replied sadly, "you are still young, and can have no knowledge of those things which came about before your mother bore you."

"I have eyes, Bosambo," replied the girl gently. "And those eyes of mine show me that your skin is black and Sandi's is white, for these things are decreed before God."

BOSAMBO arrived at the Residency one morning early in November. He came in a simple fishing-canoe with three paddlers, and the very fact that he had come so simply told Sanders that his mission was serious.

He drew from his waistband what Sanders recognised with suspicion as being a pillow-case, and on this blew his nose. Having done this, he made a great show of mopping his face, as though he were streaming with perspiration, passed it over the back of his neck, and was even indelicate enough to pat himself gently beneath the arms.

Sanders watched these antics with a perfectly blank face.

"Sandi," said Bosambo, breathing heavily, as though overcome with the heat, "it is hot to-day—as hot as the hell into which, undoubtedly, we shall fall if we do not follow the blessed way."

He looked up expectantly, but when Sanders made no comment he went on, "Now, Sandi, I tell you frankly that never have I known such exhaustion as this day, when I have paddled with all my strength, since I have come in your lordship's service."

"Speed in my service, Bosambo," replied Sanders, "I have always expected from you."

Bosambo looked desperate. He hung his tongue out and panted, and when, at last, Sanders could no longer control the faintest flicker of amusement at the back of his eyes, the chief saw it at once and said, with a wide grin, "Sandi, I thirst."

Sanders nodded and clapped his hands for his orderly.

"Bring for the Chief Bosambo . . ." he began, when the Houssa servant had appeared.

"Master," said Bosambo eagerly, so far forgetting himself as he lay a huge paw on Sanders' sleeve, "this time may it be beer? For the last time when I came, you gave me a thin green drink which tasted of naught but fruit and, behold, Sandi, it made my teeth quite sharp and sour, and my gums seemed to wither."

"Bring beer for the chief," nodded Sanders, and then, when the orderly had gone, "You are come to me, Bosambo, because certain evil men grumble and plot against you."

"Sandi, nothing is hid from you."

"Nothing," said Sanders. "For I know, too, of a certain happening near the village of Tigini. And, behold, my ears have heard of how a certain man heated a spear in a little fire."

"O ko!" said Bosambo in dismay. "Now if Tigini has spoken to your lordship, I will . . ."

"You will what, Bosambo?" asked Sanders gently.

"I will chide him for his naughtiness," replied the chief, without a moment's hesitation.

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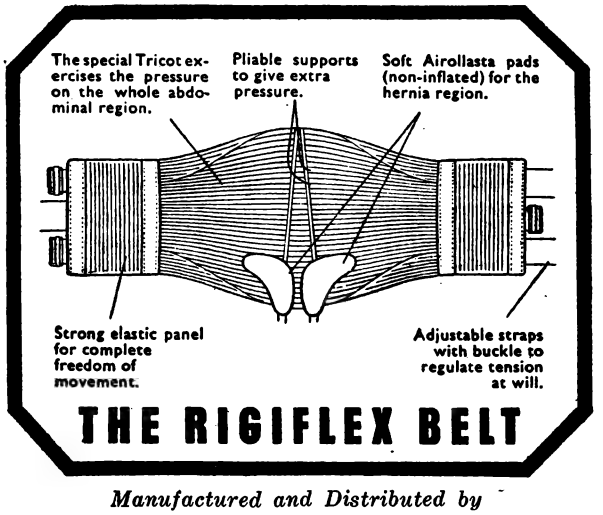
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"speaking to him as the chief and *baba* of my people, and he will know that I speak for his good, and will love me for it."

Bosambo got little help from Sanders, the Commissioner telling him in as many words that he was quite capable of handling this business himself, but that should there be reports of savage beatings there would be trouble for the chief.

"Master," said Bosambo, "if I beat them, they will cry out."

"Then beat them so that they do not cry out," said Sanders. "The palaver is finished."

It was at this moment that Mr. Francis Augustus Tibbetts emerged from his hut across the parade ground carrying a number of brightly coloured objects beneath his arm. He started for the Residency with great strides, halted, appeared to hold a brief conversation with himself, clicked, shook his head, and once more came on towards the verandah.

Bones and Bosambo greeted one another, and then the chief said, "Bonesi"—he hesitated, remembered Sanders' presence and went on, "Tibbetti, what are those bright little things which you carry?"

"Fireworks," said Bones, and then in the vernacular, "little things which make a great noise and stars."

It took Bones about three-quarters of an hour to explain to Bosambo what a firework was, and at the end of it lit a squib and flung it down on the ground.

"Thus do they behave, Bosambo," he nodded, and, turning to the chief, found he was no longer there.

Bosambo's face appeared round the end of the Residency.

"But, Tibbetti," asked the chief, when at last he was induced to return, "if these little things are not to slay men, for what purpose are they made?"

"They are made," said Bones slowly and inaccurately, "to do honour to one"—he hesitated over the name of Guy Fawkes and then went on, "To do honour to one, G'Fuko, who would have slain the king of our land."

Bones stumbled through his explanation in the Bomongo tongue, and Bosambo somehow gathered that Guy Fawkes was a saint like Marki, Luki and Johni, who had been the brother of a certain evil king, who had wished to poison him.

"Bonesi," he asked at length, "when do you make these great stars to move?"

"To-night, Bosambo," replied Bones. "For to-day is the fifth day of this month, and the year day upon which G'Fuko would have slain the king."

IT was after dinner that night, when the swift tropical dusk had deepened into night, that Bones gave his display of pyrotechnics. To Sanders and Hamilton, who were sitting on the verandah, which had been hung with fine mosquito netting, he came, and saluting, said:

"Jolly old sirs, if I may be allowed, I will just outline fearfully roughly the order of procedure. I will, of course, commence with the jolly old squibs and little fellers. After which we will progress through the whirling chappies and catherine wheels, reservin', as it were, our jolly old heavy guns for the final amazin' display."

"Are you quite sure you know how to work these things?" asked Sanders.

Bones closed his eyes and shook his head gently.

"Well, *do* you, Bones?" asked Hamilton. "I don't mind about the squibs and things, but do be careful of the rockets."

"Ham," said Bones, suddenly vivacious, "I ain't let you into this yet, but for the last one of all I've got a fifteen-bobber."

"A what?" asked Hamilton.

"A fifteen-bobber. Six jolly old half-crowns all goin' off in one simple terrific bang."

Hamilton shook his head. "What an awful waste of money!" he said. "Still, it's yours."

The firework show was to be watched not only by the Commissioner and Captain Hamilton, but also by the entire staff of the Residency, to say nothing of some two hundred Houssas and their wives, who were squatting at the end of the married lines. Bosambo, recovered from his fright earlier in the day, was acting as Bones' assistant.

Lieutenant Tibbetts, to save himself the trouble of repeatedly striking matches, had armed himself with a long wax taper. This he lit, watched interestedly by the Ochori chief, who asked, "Bonesi, will that little thing rush into the heavens in a moment?"

Bones explained and, taking a Chinese cracker from the bulging pocket of his jacket, held the taper to it. Cast upon the ground, the Chinese cracker did all that was expected of it. It bounced and spluttered and shot off fascinating little stars and jumped about like a Mexican bean, to the huge gratification of Bones' native audience. Unfortunately, so absorbed was the producer of this spectacle in the sight of his first firework doing what it should do, that he inadvertently held the lighted taper too near his coat pocket, and before anybody could realise what was happening, Bones was exploding about the parade ground, with his coat on fire and the most astounding reports and stars shooting from him in all directions.

"Ow!" screeched Bones. "Put it out! Put it out! Lend a hand, Bosambo."

But Bosambo lent nothing unless it were his feet, and these he was busily employing in placing as much distance between himself and the human squib as possible.

Before Hamilton could reach his subordinate, Bones had torn his coat off and flung it on the ground, where it jumped about like a live thing.

"Master," said Sergeant Abiboo as Hamilton was returning to the Residency steps, "we did not know that Tibbetti would shoot flames from his own person, and truly it was a wondrous and pretty sight. Now you shall tell me, Militini, when Tibbetti causes a great one to rush into the sky, will he rise with it? For I have laid a wager with Sergeant Ahmet, here, that he will do so."

"All things are with God," replied Hamilton in Arabic. "But I do not think I should lay that wager."

The rest of the show went without hitch until the finale. Catherine wheels whirled and spluttered, jumping jacks jumped, and altogether Bones'

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Guy Fawkes night was pretty successful.

When the first rocket rose into the sky there were loud shouts of acclamation from all save Abiboo, who solemnly handed over certain coins to Sergeant Ahmet, since, as the latter pointed out, Tibbetti had stayed upon the ground.

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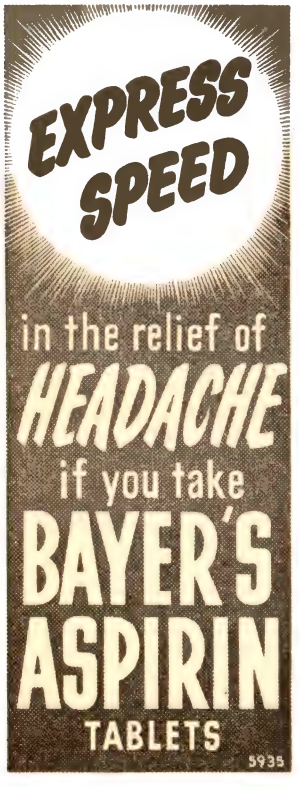

WHEN Bones came to light the tail of his huge fifteen-bobber rocket, he made a miscalculation. He assumed that the angle at which the rocket stick should be set in the ground would be the same for a very small rocket as for a very large one. Now this is not so. All his rockets hitherto he had pointed up into the sky, so that they went straight over the heads of the watching Houssas and burst over the woods at the end of the river-path. This time he did the same.

He touched the tail of the rocket with his lighted taper, and stepped hastily back. Nothing happened.

"Bless my jolly old soul!" said Bones. "Surely this one ain't goin' to let me down."

He went close up to it, and, stooping down, peered more closely at it. Instantly, as though trembling with wrath at his approach, the huge rocket began to shake all over and to emit a most disagreeable roaring sound.

"Oh lor!" said Bones, and once more stepped away from it.

For what seemed an amazingly long time the huge firework groaned and grumbled and trembled all over, and then, as though reluctant to start on its journey into space, trundled up off the ground. It went with none of the swish of the smaller rockets, and it was Hamilton who first spotted what was going to happen.

"Good heavens! sir," he exclaimed to the Commissioner, "it won't clear the huts."

Straight for the assembled Houssas went the rocket, by this time gathering tremendous momentum with every foot it travelled, and the Houssa audience, who had watched all the others shoot over their heads, witnessed its approach in a state of complete petrefaction.

"Oy!" yelled Bones. "Look out, you old sillies! Duck!"

At the last moment the Houssas ducked, and the rocket shot between Sergeant Abiboo and his wife, and flung itself like an aerial torpedo against the wall of Corporal Oka's hut. From this it ricochetted right across the lines, hit the roof of Sergeant Ahmet's humble home, bounced off and started on its real journey into the sky.

"Phew!" whistled Hamilton, and mopped his brow with his handkerchief. "Hey there, you silly goop, you might have killed somebody."

"All's well that ends well, dear old superior," said Bones. And that was the end of the great Guy Fawkes display at the Residency.

As Bones went to his hut that night, Bosambo waylaid him and said, "Tibbetti, how may I purchase such things as you have shown us to-night?"

"Fireworks?" asked Bones in astonishment. "There are some others in my hut."

"Lord," said Bosambo humbly, "will you not sell me five of the great ones which rush into the sky?"

"In what manner will you use them, Bosambo?" asked Bones curiously.

"Lord," said Bosambo, his eyes wide and innocent, "I would loose them into the sky upon the year-day of your lordship's birth."

Bones was delighted, and impressing upon Bosambo that his birthday was not until the following May, gave the chief half a dozen rockets as a present.

"Tibbetti," said Bosambo, his face reflecting his adoration of the other, "I shall treasure these within my hut until the great day is come, when I will make them fly to heaven. And, behold, each shall carry a prayer, one to Marki, one to Luki, one to Johni and yet another to the blessed Pauli, who was a great writer of letters."

"Jolly old Bosambo!" choked Bones genuinely moved.

UPON Bosambo's return to his people he called a great *likambo*, which is still spoken of in the land as the Palaver of T'Kela-T'Kela.

From the fishing villages to the west to the forest villages along the French border, his headmen and lesser chiefs came travelling at his summons. From the north came Tigini, trembling lest Bosambo should reveal what he had learnt from him; and from the north, too, came Tumkoro, who was the leader of the conspiracy against his chief. Belefari, of the Inner Ochori, came proudly, being preceded by no less than fifty spearmen and twenty dancing-girls, and Bosambo eyed him unlovingly. N'Guso, yet another suspect, being a lesser captain of Bosambo's own guard, was, of course, already in the Ochori city. R'Asali and Ota travelled together, their consciences uneasy at this great *likambo* which their chief had called.

"Oh, my people," said Bosambo, when all had arrived and the dense mass of his audience was spread in a vast semicircle before him, "all men know that I, your chief, love you as I love myself. Is this not so?"

No one answered, and Bosambo glanced down to where Tumkoro squatted within a few paces of him, and asked gently, "Is this not so, Tumkoro?"

The man hesitated, and Bosambo's hand moved slowly towards a whip of thick hippopotamus hide.

"It is so," said Tumkoro hastily.

"Now because of my love for you," went on Bosambo, "I spend many hours of each night thinking and planning that you may know great happiness, and yet it has come to my ears that certain evil men have no love for me."

He paused, and his quick eye noted that Belefari and N'Guso moved uneasily.

"Now this is a shame in the face of the sun," Bosambo continued, "and because no thing is caused without a reason, I have been to Sandi who is my own first cousin by marriage, to seek the advice of his wisdom. Now this is Sandi's word," he went on untruthfully: "that it is too high a matter for even him, though he is our lord and *baba* holding our lives in his hands. He has said to me that I must go to make a palaver with one who is more terrible than kings."

"Bosambo," said Tumkoro hopefully, "do you then leave us, who are your children?"

"Nay, nay," replied Bosambo, watching the other's face fall. "For this one from whom I must seek guidance is one known to you all, the Great One, the Terrible One —T'Kela-T'Kela himself."

"O ko!" gasped Bosambo's people, for this was high politics — so high as to be almost unbelievable; for no man, since the beginning of time, had ever dared to go to T'Kela-T'Kela, the great storm-devil, to speak with him as man to man.

"Bosambo," said Tumkoro, rising to his feet, "if you go to make a palaver with T'Kela-T'Kela, he will assuredly slay you with much noise, and, we, your children, will be left without a chief."

"Have no fear, Tumkoro," smiled Bosambo benignly, "for I shall return."

He looked round at his audience, gauging their reactions, and saw that they were deeply impressed by this courageous decision of his.

"Now this, my people, is in my mind: that when a chief goes to make a palaver with another chief or a great one, he goes not empty-handed, but takes with him splendid presents and gifts, such as

(Please turn to page 75)

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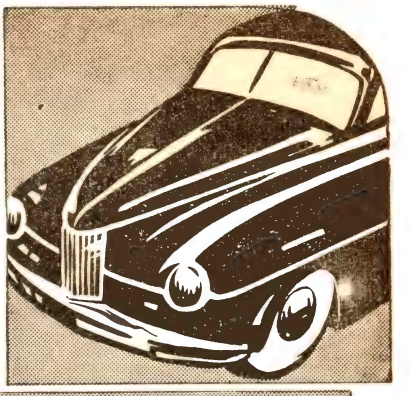

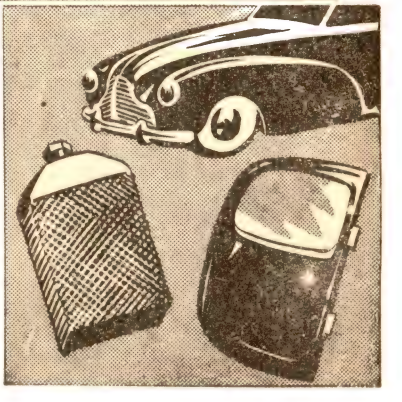

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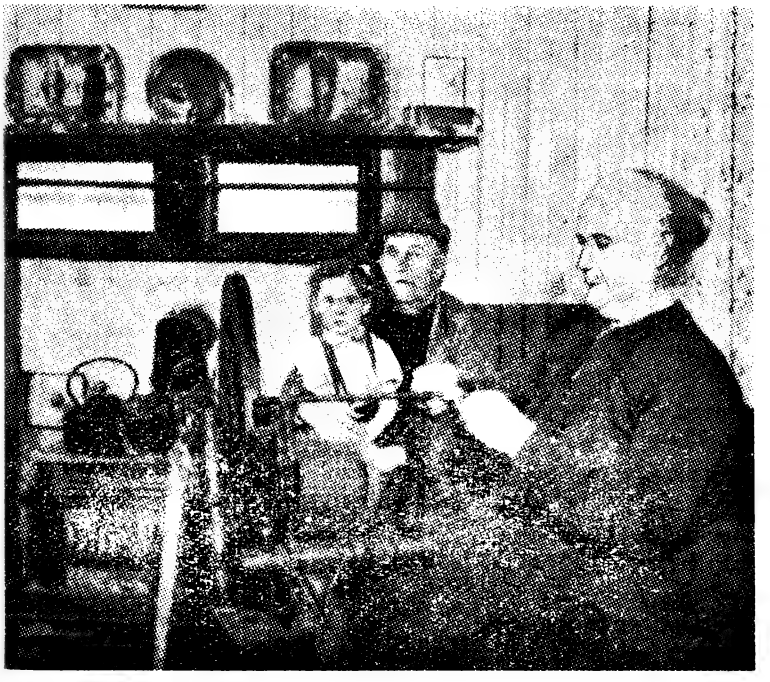
.....A.J.1

Please state voltage of your battery. Please write in BLOCK CAPITALS.



The spinning wheels have been handed down by generation after generation of Hebridean women.

Originally woven for their own use by the inhabitants of the bleak Hebrides,

Harris Tweed

is now in demand the world over. Here, briefly told, is the story of this tough fabric, whose manufacture has given a community a new prosperity, as durable as Harris Tweed itself.

By F. J. LYONS

FIFTY miles off the west coast of Scotland, forming a solid barrier against the storms of the Atlantic, lie the Hebridean Islands of Lewis, Harris, Uist, Barra and Benbecula. Despite their isolation and apparently barren appearance, these islands support a population of just under 40,000 people, whose main occupation is weaving the world's most exclusive material — Harris tweed, or Clo-Mor, as it is known in Gaelic.

In the 1920's the islands were dying, although they were the last area in Scotland to suffer from the creeping paralysis of depopulation, when the poverty of life on the crofts drove the rising generation away from the Highlands into the towns. Once it did start, the decline in the population of the outer islands was three times as fast as that which occurred on the mainland.

To-day, however, visitors who have not been there for twenty years would be astonished at the bustle of life in the outer islands. This increased tempo is almost entirely due to the world-wide demand for Harris tweed which has developed in recent years.

From ports scattered along the eastern seaboard of the islands, the Hebrideans ship their famous cloth to the four corners of the earth. Largest of these ports is Stornoway with 5,000 inhabitants, a typical grey-stone Highland port, situated on a sea-loch facing across to the mainland as if turning its back to the wintry blasts of the Atlantic.

Although in Lewis, Stornoway is the centre of the thriving weaving industry which takes its name from the former's sister island of Harris, where the tweed was originally produced for the islanders' own use rather than for the outside world. In fact, it was not until the beginning of the nineteenth century that the proprietors of Harris, the Dynmores, encouraged the islanders to weave patterns which would appeal to "mainlanders."

Since that time Harris tweed has gained for itself an international reputation as the most exclusive cloth in the world. In fact so popular has it proved itself that overseas manufacturers, both in England and abroad, have attempted to emulate the islanders' skill. Imitation tweeds with titles such as "Harris Isle," "Norris tweed," or "Harris tweed-type" have been offered to the public in an endeavour to "cash in" on the genuine article's reputation.

Combating this type of "piracy" is the Harris Tweed Association, formed in 1910, under whose famous trade mark, comprising an orb surmounted by a Maltese Cross, granted to the Association by the Board of Trade, the tweed is guaranteed to have been "made from pure virgin wool produced in Scotland, spun, dyed, and finished in the Outer Hebrides and hand-woven by the islanders at their own homes in the Islands of Lewis and Harris, Uist, Barra and their several purtenances, and all known as the Outer Hebredies."

It may seem uneconomic that the means of producing Harris Tweed should be scattered over an area of 1,800 square miles in an apparently haphazard manner. But genuine trade-marked Harris tweed is still made in the crofts in very much the traditional manner of the islands, handed down from generation to generation. Its peculiar properties, however, depend not only upon the manner in which it is woven, but also upon the manner in which it is woven, but also upon the materials which go into its production.

Originally all wool used in Harris tweed was obtained from the black-faced sheep, which still eke out a sparse existence on the barren moorlands that form the major part of the islands' surfaces. The number of sheep which can be supported on such pasturage is limited, and with the increasing demands of the outside world for Harris tweed, wool has had to be imported from the mainland of Scotland.

The ancient craft of making tweed involves a series rather than a single process. First the fleeces are sorted, and then washed in the burns of peat-coloured water, which are to be found in the neighbourhood of every croft or cottage. After being dried on the large granite boulders, which litter the streambeds of the islands, the fleeces are dyed in large cast iron cauldrons, heated over open fires of peat and driftwood. For the actual dyeing itself local dyes are used. Yellow is obtained from bog myrtle, green from iris and heather gathered in bud, whilst the well-known reddish-brown tinge is produced by crotal, a lichen which has to be scraped off the boulders upon which it normally grows. As can be imagined, gathering the ingredients for these natural dyes is a lengthy and arduous proceeding.

Next the fleeces are hung up to dry in the neighbourhood of the open fires, so that smoke blowing across them can impregnate them with the aromatic scent peculiar to Harris tweed. As the old rhyme from Punch goes:

I met a man in Harris tweed
As I walked down the Strand:
I turned and followed like a dog
The breath of hill and sea and bog,
That clung about that coat of brown.

When dry, the wool is carded to loosen and fine it for the spinning process.

(Please turn to page 79)

The Children of T'Kela

(Continued from page 72)

may please the other with whom he would talk. Now, I, Bosambo, am a poor man, since I have within this moon, in my journey to Sandi, paid him great stores of wealth in taxes and, behold, I have naught to take with which to please T'Kela-T'Kela. Now, since you love me, you would not wish me to go emtpy-handed; therefore each headman will bring to me twenty rods of brass and five bags of salt, and each village in this land will give me five and five goats, and with these splendid gifts I will go to T'Kela-T'Kela to question him for your good."

"How shall we know that T'Kela-T'Kela receives these fine presents?" asked Tumkoro, who was trembling with rage.

"That you will not know, Tumkoro," replied Bosambo, idly picking up his whip, "until you see me return from my palaver with the Great One without your splendid presents. You, Tumkoro, will be the first, I know, to place within my hands the brass rods and salt. Is this not so?"

Again the headman hesitated, and then, as Bosambo's guards moved quickly forward until their chief stood within a wall of his spears, Tumkoro nodded and choked out, "I shall be the first, Bosambo."

SOME three weeks passed before the "presents" were duly assembled at Bosambo's city. They had been fetched by his fighting regiments, since there had been an unaccountable wave of poverty strike the whole tribe, and men found themselves unable to produce the requisite number of rods and bags of salt.

Bosambo's journey to the north to R'kumu-T'Kela-R'kumu-Oosoongori was something in the nature of a triumphal progress, for the vast herds of goats were driven before him, innumerable carriers sweated and staggered beneath the bags of salt and brass rods, and most of the Ochori headmen travelled with the cortege to be quite sure that their presents reached the person for whom they were designed. A sudden thunderstorm changed their minds for them, and Bosambo was able to divert his caravan to the east, where it circled round and returned to the Ochori city.

He, himself, went on alone, and spent three days hunting in the foothills of the plateau, thoroughly enjoying his little holiday.

He returned a week later to his city, and so grave was his expression that all men knew that he had undoubtedly talked with T'Kela-T'Kela.

Once more ta great *likambo* was called. But this time it was to take place on the dreaded plateau which men called the Place of T'Kela's Rage. Many of the headmen flatly refused to come until Bosambo announced that the storm-god had told him that those who would not come were the evil men who had plotted against their chief. The witch-doctors did a brisk trade in protective amulets and charms, Bosambo taking fifty per cent. of the profits by a previous arrangement; for, as he pointed out to the reluctant medicine men, he could call his *likambo* where he chose, and if he made it the Ochori city, they would sell no charms at all.

When the frightened headmen and chiefs arrived at T'Kela-T'Kela's stamping-ground there was much spitting to the right and left in propitiation, even before they saluted their chief. Bosambo they found seated before an amazing hut, which had been built specially for him by his guard, and in the ground in front of his stool were placed five strange objects such as they had never seen before.

"I see you, Bosambo," exclaimed Tumkoro, who was the last to arrive. "Now you shall tell me what are these brightly coloured things before your feet?"

And then Bosambo said a very terrible thing—something which sent the assembled headmen stumbling hastily back, their mouths working in terror.

"These five things of lovely colours," said the Ochori chief solemnly, "are the five fine sons of T'Kela-T'Kela himself."

He saw that many of the smaller chiefs looked away from these brightly coloured objects, and went on unmoved: "When I came to make this palaver with T'Kela-T'Kela, he came down and stood upon his dreadful feet, and even I, Bosambo, trembled; for he is of the colour of the sun, having six arms and three legs. Moreover his head is placed backwards upon him, and his hair is made of the great trees of the forest, and from his eyes shoot great lights, so that for two days after I was blind and fed by these children of T'Kela-T'Kela, who came to minister to me at their father's bidding. To-night, in your presence, I shall speak again to the Great One, and, behold, I will send these children of his back to him, that they may whisper in his deadful ear, and he will tell me that which I desire to know."

There was a stupefied silence when the chief finished speaking, and the assembly melted quickly away to wait for the dreaded moment when they should be called to attend this ghostly *likambo*.

It was about nine o'clock that night that Bosambo summoned his audience, whose anxiety was in no way allayed by the growl of distant thunder, which they knew only too well to be the voice of T'Kela-T'Kela.

Oratory on the river is judged not by its quality, but by its length, and Bosambo spoke for over an hour, calling upon the Great One by name (a most daring thing to do), and promising this powerful ju-ju the return of his five children.

During his long speech the storm came nearer, and vivid lightning, that dreaded spear of T'Kela-T'Kela, flickered and flashed in all directions. The awful roaring of the great ju-ju's voice seemed almost overhead now, and Bosambo's audience cowered, shivering before him while he called in a loud voice upon the storm-god.

Suddenly he ceased speaking, and a tremendous clap of thunder, right overhead, seemed, to the shivering headmen, like the vast crack of a giant whip.

Bosambo, alone, was unmoved, and picking up from his side a box of matches (borrowed, for want of a better word, from Bones), he approached the five objects on the ground before a stool.

"O T'Kela-T'Kela," he called, "I send you your first fine son. O T'Kela-T'Kela, let him whisper in your lovely ear, and give me your answer."

With that Bosambo lit the rocket, and as it flashed away into the sky, most of the headmen fell flat upon their faces in terror. The rocket burst high over them with a great spray of green stars, and then Bosambo, standing with his hand behind his ear, called, "Louder, T'Kela-T'Kela. Speak louder."

T'Kela-T'Kela replied in no uncertain voice, for a huge clap of thunder seemed as though it would shiver the entire plateau, and Bosambo cried, "My thanks, Terrible One, for the name you have given me."

He looked down at his gaping audience and said, "The Terrible One has spoken," and he has named you, Tumkoro, as one who would plot against me."

Four more times Bosambo despatched his rockets, and each time T'Kela-T'Kela replied, and the chief in turn named Belefari, N'Guso, R'Asali and Ota.

When the last of the conspirators had thus been named, Tumkoro threw down his spear and, coming to Bosambo, said, "Chief, you are a chief indeed, and I will face your punishment, as will these others. For I tell you, Bosambo, that had we known you to be so great a wizard, we would not have grumbled, nor dared to have such naughty thoughts as have been ours."

Bosambo thought quickly and, regretfully turning down an opportunity for further material profit, replied, "Go back to your villages, and we shall speak of this matter no more; for have I not said that I am chief and *baba* to my people and that I love them as a father? You are, to me," he went on extravagantly, "as dear as are those five children whom I threw into the sky to T'Kela-T'Kela. This palaver is finished."

With the storm roaring and bellowing over his head, Bosambo stood alone and watched his chastened headmen hurry eagerly down the hill and out of sight into the forest. Then, turning, his eye fell upon the great hut which was stacked with so much wealth, and he chuckled, and breaking into the English of the Coast exclaimed, "You number one fellah, Bosambo. You catchum plenty money one-time. You clever Christian."

He started slowly towards the hut with its vast store of riches and said aloud, looking at the sky overhead, "You damn-fine fellah, T'Kela-T'Kela. You dash Bosambo heap plenty presents."

At that moment there came a blinding flash of lighning, which seemed to strike just over Bosambo's shoulder, and at the same moment his ear-drums were nearly shattered by the proximity of an immense clap of thunder. He was flung from his feet, and even as he fell he saw the hut, with all that wealth stored in it, to be a sheet of flame.

Bosambo, paramount-chief and overlord of all the Ochori, made no attempt to retrieve his blazing possessions, for he stayed not upon the order of his going. ●

The AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL JUNIOR MAGAZINE

Between You and Me

RIDDLES

Why is a piano like a bank?
(Because it gives out notes.)
How do you make a slow horse fast?
(Stop feeding him.)
Why is the sun like a good loaf?
(Because it is light when it rises.)
(Three marks to **Elsa Hedt**, Blackheath, Horsham, Vic.)

When is a boy like a parcel?
(When he is wrapped in thought.)
When is an eye not an eye?
(When an onion makes it water.)
When is a picture like weak tea?
(When it is not drawn properly.)
(Three marks to **Suzanne Douglas**, 11, Flaggy Rock, Q'ld.)

What has a tongue yet can't talk?
(A shoe.)
What goes from bank to bank without getting wet?
(Money.)
(Two marks to **Robin Leask**, 8, 20 Oxford Terrace, Taringa, Brisbane, Q'ld.)

What has a neck, arms and a tail but can't talk?
(A shirt.)
What does a ship weigh before she sets sail?
(She weights anchor.)
(Two marks to **Dorothy Hourston**, 14, Temple St., Croydon, Nth. Q'ld.)

What miss is always making blunders?
(Mistake.)
In what month do ladies talk the least?
(In February, because it's the shortest.)
What is the difference between a person late for the train and a schoolmistress?
(One misses the train and the other trains the misses.)
(Three marks to **Rubina Hourston**, 12, Temple St., Croydon, Nth. Q'ld.)

What has not got flesh nor bone but is alive?
(Electric wire.)
What is round and knobbly, it has eyes but cannot see?
(A potato.)
(Two marks to **Sandra Mansfield**, 8, 27 Peet St., Harvey, W.A.)

What birds keep you company at meals?
(Swallows.)
What animals do you find on letters?
(Seals.)
(Two marks to **Loraine Mayrhofer**, Mundaring, W.A.)

Why is the wick of a candle like Athens?
Because it is in Greece [grease].)
What is it that never asks questions, but has to be continually answered?
(The door bell.)
What is the difference between a wet day and a lion with toothache?
(One is pouring with rain and the other is roaring with pain.)
When is money damp?
When it is due [dew] in the morning and missed [mist] at night.)
When are three statesmen like a mile?
(When they make a league.)
(Three marks to **Janice Lewis**, 11, Mt. Pleasant, Moolboolaman, via Bundaberg, Q'ld.)

THE PRIZE LETTER

DEAR JENNIFER,

I must tell you about my visit to one of Maryborough's oldest houses. Its real name is Baddow House, but it is known locally as "Ghost House." Most of the windows are boarded up and it is rather gloomy inside. The additional sound of the rusty windmill completes the illusion that the house is haunted.

There are fourteen large rooms with lovely old-fashioned fireplaces. Solid oak stairs lead up to the second story. The rooms have no furniture as the last owners took that with them.

Outside on the porch you have a lovely view of the surrounding country. The large, spacious grounds lead down the slope to the Mary River. The well laid out gardens are now overgrown with weeds.

Built sometime back in the nineteenth century, the house must have been very lovely. If I had enough money I would buy it and make it as beautiful as it must have been those many years ago.

Yours sincerely,

NORMA BUETTEL, 15,
87 Pleasant St., Maryborough, Q'ld.

I think you'll agree Norma has caught some of the ghostliness of the old house in this drawing. Five marks, Norma — and you'll receive a book prize for your letter.

HOBBIES

I have numerous things to do. I play tennis, basketball and softball. In the winter when it is raining, I sit by the fire reading books or doing embroidery. The books I find most interesting are by Charles Dickens and Charlotte Bronte.

In summer when it is fine, I go to Wattle Park with some friends and play tennis. We take sandwiches and cakes and eat them on the grassy banks of the court.

The rest of my time I devote to collecting stamps and wild flowers, which I enjoy doing very much.

(Four marks to **Pam Cartwright**, 15, 10 Linden St., Box Hill South, Vic.)

LET'S LAUGH

Wife (at 3 a.m.): John, I'm sure I heard a mouse squeak.
Husband (rolling over): Well, what do you want me to do—get up and oil it?

Teacher: If you were an inventor, Nat, what would you invent?
Nat: A machine to do my homework by pressing a button.
Teacher: You lazy boy. Ralph, what would you invent?
Ralph: A machine to press the button!
(Two marks to **Nola Tanner**, 12, 18 Gardner Ave., West Croydon, S.A.)

Mistress: Good gracious, Martha, what's that you have in the oven?
New Maid: I dropped the packet of candles in the sink, Mum, and I'm drying them off.
(Two marks to **Suzanne Douglas**, 11, Flaggy Rock, Q'ld.)

Customer: Will I be able to stick this wallpaper on myself?
Shopkeeper: Yes, lady, but it would look much better on the wall!

Doctor: You must walk for three hours every day.
Postman: Before or after I deliver my letters?
(Three marks to **Wendy Schmidt**, 8, M.S. 1333, Ambrose, Q'ld.)

Two fathers were discussing their children. Said one: "What's your son going to be when he gets out of college?"
Replied the other: "Looks like he's going to be an old man."

Doctor: There goes the only woman I ever loved.
Nurse: Why don't you marry her?
Doctor: I can't afford to. She's my best patient.
(Two marks to **Delma Stevenson**, 13, 89 Wyrallah Rd., Lismore, N.S.W.)

Tommy: Dad, can I have a shilling to give to a poor cripple.
Dad: You're a good boy, Tommy. Where is the cripple?
Tommy: Selling tickets for the circus.
(Two marks to **Joyce Horniman**, 13, Bray St., Murwillumbah, N.S.W.)

Mother: Would you like to see the cuckoo come out of the cuckoo clock?
David: No, but I would like to see grandfather come out of the grandfather clock.
(Two marks to **Helen Bate**, 15, 304 Main Rd., Scarborough, N.S.W.

A motorist motoring through the country ran out of petrol for his car. On seeing a farmer, who was partly deaf, he said: "Could you tell me where I can obtain petrol for my car?"
Farmer: "Hey?"
Motorist: "This isn't a horse and sulky, it's a motor car!"
(Two marks to **Loraine Mayrhofer**, Mundaring, W.A.)

Violinist: Don't you think my playing is heavenly?
Listener: Well, it certainly sounds unearthly.

Teacher: What is a man that tans hides called?
Boy: Please, sir, a teacher.
(Two marks to **Dorothy Hourston**, 14, Temple St., Croydon, Nth. Q'ld.)

GOOD RESOLUTIONS

N is for naughty, I never will be;
E is for early home from school, you'll see;
W is for willing to help mum and dad;
Y is for yes, I'll smile and be glad;
E is for earnest in all that I do;
A is for alertness in crossing roads, too;
R is for resolutions I hope to keep.
New Year pleasures then I'll reap.

(Four marks to **Tony Grant,** 8, 67 Wales St., W. Footscray, Vic.)

A FRIEND

Just two brown eyes, a little waggly tail, a brown patch over one eye, two silly little ears always flopping, two wobbly little legs, but a great big heart. That was what he was like when you first met him. And in the bottom of your heart he always remained the same small lovable pup.

What if he did chew up all your best slippers, hide all the bath towels, take bones from all the neighbours' yards? What if he did frighten all the cats within miles, put his muddy paws all over your clean kitchen floor?

Sometimes if trouble or sadness came into life, he would be waiting for you. He would put his dear little brown head on one side and his beautiful brown eyes would seem to say, "Even if the sun doesn't shine brightly all around you, you can shine." With quiet sympathy, he understood. And when you cried into his shaggy coat his wet tongue would lick your hand and say "cheer up."

(Five marks to **Joan Rance,** 13, 2 Royston Ave., East Malvern, S.E.5, Melbourne, Vic.)

MARINE EXHIBITION

A little while ago the children at my school went to see a marine exhibition which was very interesting. There was a large display of shells and sea creatures.

The sea horse is an extraordinary fish found in shallow water. The body is covered with jointed armour of horny plates. The tail is used as an anchor to grasp the stems of seaweed amongst which the fish usually live. Instead of the female having the pouch the male has it.

Another interesting specimen is the stone fish. Situated along its back are thirteen spines, each of which is provided with two venom glands and the moment they are touched they stand up erect and rigid. No doctor can cure the wound except the witch doctors, who are supposed to use a herb. Its body resembles a piece of eroded stone or coral and is difficult to detect.

The Port Jackson shark is a small shark and only grows to four feet. It is the oldest shark living and is the only one that lays eggs. This shark lays very extraordinary eggs. They are an olive-green in colour and are provided with spiral flanges; they are about six inches in length.

We saw many beautiful shells including some pearl shells. Natives use these for scooping water out, cooking and carrying their babies in.

(Seven marks to **Margaret Bell,** 14, Napier, Albany, W.A.)

A WALK IN BOOKLAND

As "Anne of Green Gables" and "Norah of Billabong" walked towards "The Rosary" they saw a "Boy" talking to some "Shepherds" near "Northanger Abbey." Going into "Uncle Tom's Cabin" they saw "Robinson Crusoe" talking to "Robin Hood." The "Swiss Family Robinson" were sitting outside watching "Little Lord Fauntelroy" "Through the Looking Glass." The "Secret Seven" walked on with them, and they had fun with "Dimsie Among the Prefects." Together the two girls went "Westward Ho" and saw "Jo's Boys." The "Maid of the Abbey" had a "Friend to Stay" and she asked them, with "The Chieftain's Daughter," to see "The Wind in the Willows," but they said that "Five Fall into Adventure," so they walked home with the "Girls in Green."

(Three marks to **Jillian Noltenius,** 14, 14 Wyndham St. Nth., Shepparton, Vic.)

BULLOCKS

This morning a lot of bullocks came along ringing their bells. They have the bells on so the men can find them when they are feeding in the bush.

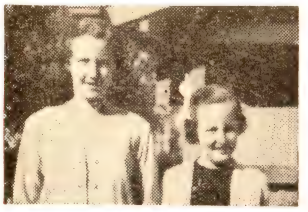
Daddy nearly went out to stop one from going across the ramp. Wasn't it a silly bullock? It got half-way over.

When the big bullocks are working they pull the logs out of the bush.

(Four marks to **Lyndy Falconer,** 9, 89 R.M.B., Ulmarra, N.S.W.)

KNOW YOUR MEMBERS.

This feature will enable you to become familiar with some of the Journal Juniors who contribute regularly to these pages. Seven marks are awarded for each photograph.



LEONIE MARXSEN (left),
21 Main St., Cobram, Vic.
Age: 12 years.
Hobbies: Reading and stamp collecting.
Favourite books: All the "Anne" books.
Subject: History.
Sports: Tennis, swimming and softball.
Ambition: To be a teacher.

ROBYN MARXSEN (right),
21 Main St., Cobram, Vic.
Age: 10 years.
Hobbies: Drawing and sewing.
Favourite book: "Glen Castle Mystery."
Subjects: Drawing and arithmetic.
Sports: Tennis and swimming.
Ambition: To be an artist or a dressmaker.

GORDON WAINWRIGHT,
82 Branyan St., West Bundaberg, Q'ld.
Age: 11 years.
Favourite book: Biggles.
Subject: Drawing.
Hobby: Stamp collecting.
Sports: Baseball, swimming and riding.
Ambition: To become a scientist.

This happy little lass is LYNDY FALCONER, 89 R.M.B., Ulmarra, N.S.W. Lyndy is only five, but does exceptionally good work for our pages.

JUNE MYATT,
26 Malvern Grove, Caulfield, Vic.
Age: 13 years.
Favourite book: "Snow Flake."
Subject: History.
Hobbies: Painting and drawing.
Sport: Rounders.
Ambition: To be a dressmaker.

RECIPE FOR LIFE

Take two parts of unselfishness and one part of patience and work together. Add plenty of industry. Lighten with good spirits and sweeten with kindness. Put in smiles as thick as raisins in plum pudding, and bake by the warmth which streams from a loving heart. Warning: If the recipe fails, don't blame it. You are a bad cook.

(Three marks to **Janice Lewis,** 11, "Mt. Pleasant," Moolboolaman, Q'ld.)

NEW SPECIES?

My small brother belongs to the Western Australian Junior Naturalists' Club. Recently he found a peculiar looking earthworm, or as we thought, sand snake. It was about as thin as your finger and a foot or so in length.

He took this specimen along to the club's meeting to have it identified, but no one knew what it was. It was then taken to the University to see if they could discover what it was, but so far they have not found out. They believe it to be an entirely new species and if it is absolutely unknown Bill has been told he may name it! Naturally he is thrilled.

(Five marks to **Joan Mackey,** 38 Connolly St., Wembley, W.A.)

Read Jennifer's letter on the next page. It is of special interest to all boys and girls.

WHAT AM I?

I have four legs and yet lay eggs,
Below the great Nile dam;
And it is said the tears I shed
Are usually sham.
If me you see retreat, retreat!
I have a taste for human meat.

(A crocodile.)

(Two marks to **Judy Fisher,** 11, Yaapeet, Vic.)

My first is in cake but not in pie,
My second is in laugh but not in cry,
My third is in reindeer that pulls Santa's sleigh,
My fourth is in holly as bright as the day,
My fifth is in bell that rings out the dawn,
My whole we sing sweetly on Christmas morn.

Answer: Carol.

(Three marks to **Tony Grant,** 8, 67 Wales St., West Footscray, Vic.

LIMERICK

There was a young man from China,
Who thought he'd make a good miner;
While digging for gold,
He caught a bad cold,
And that was the end of the miner.

(Three marks to **Judith Light,** Narrikup, W.A.)

NANA'S TRIP

My Nana went to Perth in a Skymaster. It was her first flight. I went to the aerodrome to see her off. It was lovely to see her plane and others coming in and going out. Nana had a wonderful trip.

(Four marks to **Lawrie Grant,** 6, 67 Wales St., West Footscray, Vic.)

RIDDLE IN RHYME

As I went through the garden gap,
Whom should I meet, but Dick Red-Cap,
A stick in his hand, a stone in his throat,
If you tell me this riddle, I'll give you a groat.

(Answer: A cherry.)

(Two marks to **Delma Stevenson,** 13, 89 Wyrallah Rd., Lismore, N.S.W.)

QUEER FACTS

The Hawaiian alphabet has only twelve letters—fewer than any other language.

In the Middle Ages, people usually had a bath only at birth, at marriage, and at death.

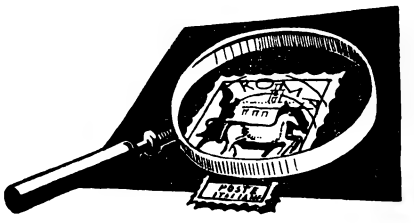
The wing of a fly makes 330 movements a second, while a bee makes 190.

A pair of women's stockings contains four miles of thread.

(Three marks to **John Troyahn,** 13, Nth. Coast Rd., Woody Pt., Q'ld.)

STAMP CORNER:

N.Z. HEALTH STAMPS



AS the New Zealand health stamps are issued annually to benefit Children's Health Camps, they nearly always feature something of special interest to junior collectors. Many of you may remember last year's designs depicting portraits of Prince Charles and Princess Anne, and, indeed, I suppose lots of you have them in your own albums. This year's designs will probably prove just as popular with boys and girls. Certainly all Boy Scouts and Girl Guides will want to give the 1953 New Zealand health stamps a prominent position in their collections.

The issue is in two denominations: 2d. (1½d. postage plus ½d. health), blue, and 3d. (2d. postage plus 1d. health), green.

The designs are the work of a Wellington man and are symbolic of the Boy Scout and Girl Guide movements, which offer to so many young people all over the world a particularly fascinating and healthy pastime, encouraging their interest in camping and other outdoor activities.

If you examine the threepenny stamp very carefully you will see that it is bordered by a message in Morse code. This reads "Health" on the top and bottom and "New Zealand" on each side. The twopenny design bears the word "Health" in Morse across the top.

COMPETITION SPOT

JUNIORS (Under Twelve)

Have you been to the zoo? If you have you are sure to have seen the animals listed below, and if you haven't, I feel sure you will have read about them. Can you unjumble them?

1. Aeenlhtp.
2. Grite.
3. Nilo.
4. Lacme.
5. Rbae.
6. Eedr.

(Three marks awarded to **Barbara Burgoyne**, Yea, Vic., for this competition idea.)

SENIORS (Twelve and Over)

Hidden in the following sentences are items of clothing which I'm sure most of you wear. I think you will find it easy enough to find them. Here is an example to give you the idea. John will bash *at* Tom.

1. Maxine has Bill's hoe.
2. We will meet Jane and co. at the gate.
3. Anne can jump Erica's fence.
4. He broke a rib bone.
5. Peg loves soup when it's hot and greasy.

Send entries for both sections, together with your name, age and address, to Jennifer, P.O. Box 2809 AA, Melbourne. Cash prizes and marks will be awarded for the neatest correct entries. Winners' names will appear in the March issue.

New Members.—Jan Evans, Irene Silvester, Helen Long, Verna Elder, Rita Kettle, Lindsay Garrett, Leanie Jean Tanner, Brian Smith, Daphne Caudle, Daryl Smith, Veronica Pearce, Margaret Bertram, Doris Turner, Diane Coombe, Rosarie Dunford, Lynne Johnson, Robin Montcalm, Carol Kiefel, Pamela Smith, Beryl Milliken, Delores Villarroya, Margaret Miller, Allan McCarthy, Norman Grimmer, Joan Prendergast, Gael Black, Hamilton Suve, Maureen Wood, Douglas Charlton, Yvonne Jones, John Mandic, Pamela Clarke, Beryl Milliken, Alan Rodda, Patricia Hunt, Flo Murphy, Barbara Pinney, Doris Warnock, Jean Williamson, George Rodger, Maureen Doherty, Dorothy Hunt, Beverley Billing, Ray Smith, Lola Davis, Elva Dent, Marlene Pearce, Herb Reynolds, Robin Frisby, Lorraine, Peter and Graeme Kowaltzke.

Replies.—Marion Skeet: No, Marion, we no longer have badges. Yes, if someone tells you a joke it is classed as copied. **Gladys Sutton:** I'm afraid your poem and drawing were not quite good enough.

DEAR BOYS AND GIRLS,

This month is the first one in a bright new year, and it is therefore the month in which we are all optimistic and expectant about what 1954 might hold for us. No matter how happy we have been in the old year, it always seems that we might be even happier in the new, and we therefore never feel sad at burying the old year deep in the past, do we? I hope that all Juniors will find 1954 full of good times and happiness—and I hope also that you'll all work very hard indeed to fill the pages with your contributions during the year.

Knowing that many of you have not much time to do the competitions when you get back to school, I'm announcing a *Special New Year Competition.* Cash prizes and marks will be awarded for the best entries. *Both Juniors and Seniors only have to write a few words saying what they would like to be if they had the choice of all trades and professions.* Give one or two reasons for your choice. Send all entries to the address given in the Competition Spot. I hope you have fun thinking about it.

Cheerio poppets,
Yours affectionately,

Jennifer

NOVEMBER RESULTS

JUNIORS

Cash prizes awarded to: Marian Bate, 304 Main Rd., Scarborough, N.S.W.; **Carolyn Wilson**, 40 Denman Pde., Normanhurst, N.S.W.; **Carol McGrath**, Wahpunga, Kin Kin, Q'ld.; **Beverley McGrath**, Wahpunga, Kin Kin, Q'ld.; **Elva Nicholson**, Ensay South, Vic.

Two marks awarded to: June Hillhouse, Carolyn Bebendorf, Richard Wilson, Patricia Hunt, Isabel Van Every, Joan Quinn, Jean Calam, Ken Lewis, Stirling Morgan, Barney Percivall, Anne Richards, Bold Bebendorf, Janice Carmody, Catherine Richards, Terry Matsen, Margaret Barber, Carmel Reinke.

SENIORS

Cash prizes awarded to: Peter Calam, Tolga, via Cairns, Q'ld.; **Esma Guinane**, Bannockburn, Vic.; **Susan Bohun**, 59 Pakington St., Kew, Vic.; **Mary Donaldson**, Caivarral, via Rockhampton, Q'ld.; **Gwendoline Bowman**, Adelaide Park Rd., Yeppon, Q'ld.; **Anne Thomas**, "Panteg," Wootha Rd., Maleny, Q'ld.

Two marks awarded to: W. Powell, Delores Villarroya, Yvonne Jones, Edith Broomhall, Madge Ebert, Laurie Wickham, Joan Brook, Jan Evans, Janice Murphy, Marion Skeet, Anne Chambers, Norma Bebendorf, Dorothy Hunt, John Mandie, Audrey Nolan, Doris Warnock, Frieda Stiller, Patricia Hennessey.

The Coast of No Return

(Continued from page 67)

thick enough to take his weight. His hands secured a grip and somehow he managed to struggle up and along the great branch until he reached the safety of the fork in the tree.

It was clear what he must do. Drop down into the jungle. There would be no betraying crushed undergrowth to show pursuers where he had entered it. So he climbed down the tree, making the painful discovery that resting had stiffened his back badly. But even more disturbing than his physical state was his loss of coherent thought. But in more conscious moments he found himself still struggling on and there was no way of knowing whether he'd kept in a straight line or had circled and was already as good as doomed.

Going on. Step . . . step . . . step. . . .

There was darkness. Was it night? Or was it his brain extinguished? He fell, and slept where he fell.

THE rest of the ordeal was time lost from his life, a hole in his memory. At the hospital they told him that men of a fishing village, working at the repair of their nets, had found a ragged skeleton wandering along the beach. *Majnun!* One whom Allah, in his wisdom, had deprived of wits. Those so touched by Allah must be treated kindly. So they brought him down the coast and to a ship. Ironically, the ship to which Merdeka had promised an escorted journey.

Lester knew nothing of these things. He returned, slowly and feebly, to life in a Singapore hospital. And when this part was over and he could not face the world of men, Fryat had let him have the jungle bungalow; not without misgivings.

So he had lived. Hidden. Huddling the shame of betrayal, haunted by the ghosts of Schrooner and Cornelius. Wrecked in body and mind. His body was mending; but there was little improvement in his mental state. He had lost the power of looking towards the morrow.

Lying on his bed, under the shroud of the mosquito netting, sweating, denied the oblivion of sleep, Lester thought about Darrow. Darrow, who had come to take him away.

He couldn't resist Darrow. Darrow was vital and living, and had power. Darrow was going to take him away. Away from all this. Did it offer escape? Would he be able to free himself from the guilt of his treachery? Would the ghosts of Schrooner and Cornelius fade?

END OF PART ONE.
The second part of this story will appear next month.

Harris Tweed

(Continued from page 74)

This is carried out very often on spinning wheels which have been handed down over generations of Hebridean womenfolk, or else is sent to Stornoway, where there are four large spinning mills, to be spun there.

Weaving capacity has outstripped spinning capacity and weavers clamour for yarn to keep them going, and in turn to satisfy the demands for tweed from the outside world. The weaving of the yarn is done on looms usually set up either inside a cottage or close by in a shed or barn —wherever there is enough light for the weaver to see what he is doing.

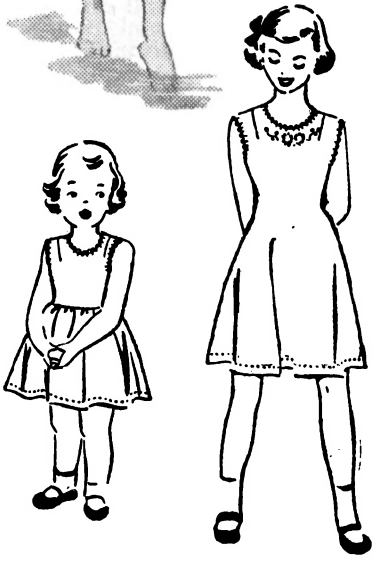
In the long summer evenings—for in the outer islands the sun sets for only a few hours during the summer months—men and women can be seen spinning and combing the wool at the doors of their whitewashed cottages.

Highlight of the year for the local inhabitants is "Waulking Day." Women come from miles around to attend the ancient ceremony of "waulking" when the web of the tweed is closed and softened by being pounded on a trestled table. As the tweed passes along the table between the seated rows of women, it is tossed to and fro with a rhythmic movement to the accompaniment of old lullabies and Gaelic folk songs connected with the ancient mythology of the islands, whose groups of tall Druidic stones are a standing, but silent, reminder of a rich but long forgotten past. ●

The Australian Journal PATTERN SERVICE

1036: Now that holiday-time is here and so many people are looking forward to spending happy days at the sea, the young lady of the house will delight in this cool and attractive play-suit. Five sizes, 4, 6, 8, 10 and **12 years.** Price **2/1.**

1507: A smart, easy to make frock specially suited for summer days. Three sizes, 32"-36" bust. Price **2/10.**



1292: Two styles are featured in this pattern for little girls' petticoats. Seven sizes, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 years. Price **1/10.**

NOTE:

Prices include postage.

Patterns can only be supplied in sizes stated.

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Pattern No..... Size.....

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(BLOCK LETTERS)

Full Address.....

.....

State.....

I enclose.....

(Please send postal notes wherever possible, but do not attach stamps when making up odd amounts, as they have to be removed before the notes can be cashed.)

SEND THIS ORDER TO:—

"THE AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL" PATTERN SERVICE,
Box 2809 AA, G.P.O., Melbourne, C.1.

In Passing . . .

Greetings!

I'D like to start 1954 with a word of thanks to everyone who, during the past year, went to the trouble of writing to tell me just what they thought of the various stories and features in the Journal. Such letters are always helpful, not only to me, but to the authors, who, being only human, are anxious to know how their work is being received.

They realise, of course, that readers, being human too, do not all like the same things, and that it would be a very dull world if they did.

The leaves of the calendar tear off so quickly nowadays that it does not seem very long since I was wishing you all the best for 1953, yet here I am again engaged on one of my most pleasant duties, that of offering you, on behalf of the Proprietors, and staff, a Happy Christmas and the best of all possible New Years!

I hope that "The Australian Journal" will contribute, in some small measure, to your enjoyment of 1954, and that it will please you even more than it has in the past.

R. G. Campbell
Editor.

In Next Issue.

Our February issue will be quite a new departure in the Journal's history. As well as the usual fiction contents — and a particularly good selection it will be too, by the way— there will be sixteen pages of pictures and articles devoted to the history of Her Majesty the Queen.

Normally, of course, a monthly magazine does not concern itself with topical features, for several reasons, one being that news items are adequately covered by daily and weekly papers. Another, of course, is that there is a big time-lapse in publishing a monthly periodical, each issue being prepared many weeks before readers see it, so that, unless he happens to be a major prophet, which is most unlikely, the unfortunate editor cannot know what is going to happen in a couple of months time, while if he waits until it *does* happen, he is always a couple of months late.

However the first visit of a reigning British monarch to Australia is much too big an event to ignore on any grounds. Our February issue will therefore contain some extremely interesting material connected not only with the present occasion, but with Royal visits of the past.

There will, for instance, be a fascinating study of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh by Hector Bolitho, and an account of the visit in 1867 of Prince Alfred, Queen Victoria's second son, who was the first prince to come to Australia.

Also reviewed are the two visits of King George V, as Prince George in 1881 and as the Duke of Cornwall and York twenty years later: the tours of the Prince of Wales in 1919, of King George VI in 1927, and of the Duke of Gloucester a few years afterwards. The cover will be an attractive portrait study of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and the whole issue will be well worth reading and keeping. Order your copy now.

* *

Comment.

D.W. (via Scone, N.S.W.): The Journal is really the best story magazine I know—for only a shilling, too. I enjoyed the serial, "The Glass Spear," and the other serial which appeared some time ago, "Ocean Without Shores." Rex Grayson is one of my favourites; also, I read with interest stories by Dale Collins, Jean E. Turnley, Chet Schwarzkopf, Mary Scott, and lots of other authors, too. Though only twelve, I must say I enjoy your magazine wholeheartedly and have read it with pleasure and added interest always since I was ten.

"Reader" (N.Z.): I take pen in haste in defence of Dale Collins' series of Bible stories. One correspondent criticises to the extent of saying, "Write him (Collins) off." Please, please don't do that! The Dale Collins Bible stories are the best things that ever happened in my life. I closed my Bible years ago and put it away because the more I read it the more confused I became; the ministers in church were boring and didn't help any. When I read those stories I could believe that such things really happened.

Mainly for Contributors

K.Y.: "Johnson had been born in a little wattle-and-daub hut on the Murray River. He worked hard, and before he died was very wealthy . . ."—So that, if he were still alive, he'd still be able to afford to live in a little wattle-and-daub hut.

A.N.R.: "There are some things so frightful, so appalling, so terrifying as to be utterly incomprehensible to the human mind . . ."—Yes, your story is one of them.

T.S.: "It is said that blondes have sweeter tempers and better dispositions than brunettes . . ."—Some women we know have been both, but it didn't make the slightest difference to their tempers.

D.B.A.: "Even during their honeymoon he snapped and snarled at her . . ."—Must have married her with a dog licence.

"Sirs: I can't understand your attitude as my wife, mother-in-law, Mr. Hazel (our local librarian) and several neighbors agreed that it was a very fine.

B.L.: We haven't noticed anything like it round here:—

But hark a groan, that wall you're passing by,
Conceals a mortal crouching there to die,
In bones and rags, amid that city fair,
No creatures live who for that mortal care,
Alone and friendless mid that filth and slime,
She lived and dies in infamy and crime,
Sad is the same scene, but sadder far to know,
You see the same wherever you may go.

P.P.: "They broke into a warehouse and stole five hundred pairs of trousers . . ."—A big male bag robbery. **F.B.:** You should go far—the farther the better. What's more, you should start at once. **N.F.:** "Dobbie's wife always believed in weighing her words . . ."—We shouldn't imagine she gave short weight, either. **L.I.:** "She became mixed up in a lot of foreign entanglements . . ."—A plate of spaghetti? **F.N.:** "Her boy friend, who was a university student, took her to the museum every Saturday . . ."—Must have been studying economics.

C.G.: The story lacks fire, but you can leave that to us! **B.S.:** We wouldn't be game enough to pay you what your story is worth. No writer would work for as little as that. **V.A.:** "Suddenly the stove exploded and blew the cook through the door . . ."—Let's hope it was her day out, anyway. **A.F.M.:** "The fish they served was not as nice as it had been the previous Friday . . ."—Yet no doubt it was part of the same shark.

B.T.: "'Never forget,' said Logan, 'that I'm your leader. I'm behind you in everything you do . . ."—Yes, like most leaders. **R.R.:** "Flecker lost all he possessed at the races . . ."—That's easily done if you have the right information and enough capital to start with. **T.W.W.:** "He was an utterly unscrupulous businessman . . ."—We once knew a businessman so unscrupulous that even the woll he pulled over his customers' eyes was half cotton.

V.T.: "They rushed back home to tell Marion that her husband had been run over by a steam-roller . . ."—Should have slid him under the door. **V.T.:** "'In my opinion,' said Curlewis, 'the atomic bomb is here to stay' . . ."—Yes, but are we?

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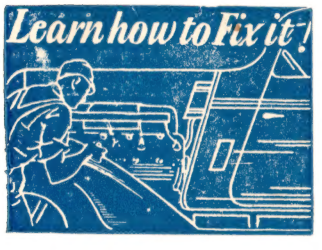

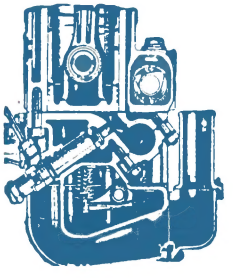

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